The Body Talks Back: An Embodied Expansion of Critical Consciousness

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Dedication

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Abstract

In this post-intentional phenomenological study, I investigated the phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults engaged in a youth participatory action research project. Sixteen participants, including the author, collaborated to examine health, well-being, and barriers to health and well-being over the course of a six-week summer research project. I analyzed sources of post-intentional material including transcripts of work sessions, discussions, focus-group interviews, and my post-reflexion journal entries.

Drawing on a neuroscience perspective (van der Kolk, 2014) and more recent considerations of Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2006, 2014) culturally-relevant pedagogy (CRP)—especially her concern over the unequal attention paid to the development of sociopolitical consciousness (when compared to the attention paid to student achievement and affirmation of student's cultural identities) in enactments of CRP. My research explores the brain-body connection and suggests that historical trauma (Menakem, 2017) lives in our racialized bodies and our social justice commitments and work cannot be addressed through our rational, thinking brains alone. This work suggests that an important part of fostering our own and one another's critical consciousness involves recognizing, listening to, and learning from the information our bodies communicate. When we are able to notice the physical sensations we experience, process the emotions that we feel, and begin to notice when our bodies are and are not settled, we have initiated the necessary body work that must take place. This bodily-knowledge can be leveraged when coupled with our cognitive knowledge and skills to better understand

ourselves and the world around us, while also better informing our decision-making and action-taking.

This study has the possibility to attract the attention of adults who care for young people, youth-workers, and educators that may imagine another way they can be with, care for, and work alongside young people. It offers important insights for understanding how critical consciousness takes shape for both young people and adults; and it explores the ways historical trauma is stored within our racialized bodies and how we might metabolize pain to find ways to heal ourselves and *be* in new ways with one another in educational contexts.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I have always known things in my body before I have found the language to articulate this bodily-knowing for myself and others. In the last decade there are two distinct moments of bodily-knowing that shaped and changed my life's trajectory. These are moments where my bodily-knowledge was so powerful that it over-rode my cognitive thinking brain. These are moments I experienced physical sensations so strong and intense that I collapsed, and was forced to work through pain, before proceeding with the pursuit of my life's work and aspirations.

Moment 1: Loss of Self in the Classroom

During my fourth-year teaching in New York City, I had a breakdown. I vividly recall screaming to my mom over the phone, "I can't do it anymore!" I recall sitting in my classroom with my principal, emotionally confessing that I no longer believed I should be leading a classroom of young people--that my students deserved someone invested, passionate, and caring and that I was so depleted, so lost, that *that person* was most certainly no longer me. I remember the guilt and shame I felt. I remember the dread I experienced every morning, and the hate and utter confusion I felt about the teacher I had become.

The school I worked for said and promoted all the *right* things: our mission was to support students in achieving academic success by cultivating their agency, curiosity, persistence, and empathy while teaching relentlessly to obliterate the "achievement gap." Our students were mostly Black and Brown, many of whom were living below the poverty line, many of whom were recent immigrants, many of whom spoke English as a

second language. Our schools' measurable outcomes were also astounding—our students' state reading and math scores were substantially higher than most if not all the public schools in New York City and among the best in the state. I was celebrated as a grade team lead. Principals even sent their teachers to visit my classroom to observe "best practices" around classroom management. Despite all these things, so much of it did *not feel right* and *I did not feel good*.

Why Didn't "Good Teaching" Feel...Good?

The teacher I aspired to be would never have separated young children into binary categories, boys and girls, and then required that they line up in height order, shortest at the front and tallest at the back so that I could ensure an ability to make eye-contact with every single one of them during transitions. The teacher I aspired to be would never have mandated how young people must sit, speak, and move in my classroom. The teacher I aspired to be would never have created or implemented a behavior system in which there were codes and consequences for everything (talking out of turn, getting out of one's seat without permission, talking-back, calling-out without raising a hand and waiting to be called on, not answering correctly when called on, touching other students etc.). The teacher I aspired to be would never have publicly displayed students' test scores and reading levels as tools for shame couched in motivation. The teacher I aspired to be would never have relied on incentive systems that rewarded students for extrinsic motivation. The teacher I aspired to be would never have humiliated students in these small and big ways. Despite who I aspired to be, I did all of these things under the guise of having and holding students to "high expectations." When I was still in the classroom, I had not yet identified these specific practices as being so contrary to my pedagogy nor

did I consider that they were contributing to what ultimately led to my breakdown. All I knew was what my body was communicating: a sinking feeling that this work was not the work I ought to be doing and an urgency to remove myself from that environment. Graduate school afforded me time and space away from the classroom, theories to learn about and think with as I read and wrote, dialogue with other doc students and faculty, and an ability to critically reflect on my teaching experiences and pedagogy. Over the last five years, I have been able to unpack and name the feelings and knowledge in my body that led me out of the classroom.

Moment 2: Losing My Brother

In the fall of 2017, I unexpectedly lost my big brother, Mike. I am not going to share the details of my brother's story here. Rather, I am going to spend time describing and exploring what happened to me as a result of losing him.

Why Is It So Hard?

In the days, weeks, and months after losing my brother, I was physically overcome with grief. In the midst of teaching, working with the community-based organization, and attempting to write my dissertation, every minute of every day was painstaking. Despite the way I wanted to engage with the world, my body seemed to refuse even the simplest tasks. Later in this dissertation, I spend some time discussing this period and the ways I am working to heal. For now, I will share that losing my brother forced me to totally recalibrate my life; it changed the way I move through, see, and understand the world. I was unable to resume moving through the world in the ways I had previously known. My body demanded that I slow down and rest. It demanded of me a new way of being in which I learned to slowly resume the other patterns of my life while

I continue to carry this loss within me. Although I always thought I understood that I cannot show up for others in the ways that I want to if I bury, deny, or avoid what I may be going through, this experience brought me to an entirely new understanding of what this meant for me.

The Body Talks Back

This dissertation is about critical consciousness. It is about the possibilities for healing and becoming more agentic in our lives through learning to become attuned to the physical sensations our body signals to us. If and when we are able to couple our bodily-knowledge as equally valuable and important to our efforts to develop cognitive knowledge, skills, and abilities, we may find new ways to expand our own and one another's critical consciousness. We may discover new and different ways of being and acting in our lives.

Statement of the Research Problem

When I entered the doctoral program in 2014, I sought to understand how macro social, economic, and political systems produce and maintain educational inequities that continue to severely, often devastatingly, impact the lives of young people moving through our educational system. As an educator, I wanted to understand how and why I arrived at a place where I no longer recognized myself as the educator I aspired to be. I sought to prepare future teachers, who are also passionate about teaching for social justice; with skills and knowledge they would need to navigate educational contexts so that they would not inadvertently perpetuate harm onto the very students they sought to empower. For me, teaching for social justice means actively resisting and working against the status quo that continues to perpetuate unjust and inequitable educational and

economic trajectories for young people around multiple social markers of identity: race, class, gender, etc. I have taken my yearning to understand and make sense of the greater social, political, and economic forces that shaped my lived experiences as a classroom teacher as the work of fostering a critical consciousness.

In the literature, sociopolitical consciousness and critical consciousness are often used synonymously. Both terms encompass a process in which individuals recognize and respond to the historical and sociopolitical contexts producing their current lived experiences, often manifesting as struggle. Critical consciousness emphasizes equal parts critical reflection and critical action or *praxis* (Freire, 1970). As individuals develop critical consciousness, they become aware of how their assumptions shape their interpretation of reality as well as their responsibility in maintaining or changing that reality (Freire, 1974). Drawing on other social justice oriented scholars (Banks, Gorski, and hooks', Jones and Vagle, Ladson-Billings, Paris, Villegas and Lucas) conceptualizations of socio-political consciousness, socio-cultural consciousness, and social-class sensitivity, I conceptualize critical consciousness as the way one comes to understand how historical, sociopolitical forces shape existing social inequality as well as provides the space for individuals to respond to these realities through critical reflection and action. I assume becoming critically conscious involves an interrogation of power and positionality. I also assume that individuals bring their experiences and multiplicity of identities to bear in this work, that each individual enters at various points, take twists and turns, move forward and around, and that no individual can ever fully arrive, as this work is never complete.

Researchers concerned with addressing educational inequities have found that incorporating experiences, interests, and cultures of minoritized students into curriculum and pedagogy enhances academic engagement and achievement (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004; Ngo et. al., 2017; Paris 2012). Ladson-Billings, most widely recognized for her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, emphasized the necessity for students to develop a sociopolitical consciousness. Developing a sociopolitical consciousness involves recognizing how historical and sociopolitical contexts undergird our current experiences and struggles (Freire, 1970/1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ngo et al., 2017). An understanding of how historical and sociopolitical forces shape our everyday lived experiences can be mobilized into social action. Through the development of a critical consciousness, students can be empowered to act—to develop individual and collective agency as a means of resisting oppressive conditions and working toward social justice.

In addition to mobilizing students as agents of change in their lives and communities, I argue that any adult working with youth must work toward developing their own critical consciousness. In their 2002 article *Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers*, Villegas and Lucas describe how important it is for teachers to expand their sociocultural consciousness—understanding that people's ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by such factors as race/ethnicity, social class, and language (Banks, 1996). Villegas and Lucas expand Banks' notion of sociocultural consciousness by including an understanding that differences in social location are not neutral; in all social systems, some positions are afforded greater status than others with differential access to power.

> Differences in access to power profoundly influence one's experience in the world, prospective teachers need to comprehend how American society is stratified, for example, along racial/ethnic, social class and gender lines (2002, p. 22).

Villegas and Lucas go on to discuss how social inequalities are produced and perpetuated through systemic discrimination and justified through a societal ideology of merit, social mobility and individual responsibility (Sturm & Guinier, 1996; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). This ideology pervades all of our institutional spaces, which is why I argue that all adults who care for and work with youth critically examine the spaces they occupy and their role in reproducing and legitimizing systems of oppression.

In the United States, structural oppression and inequitable resources produce marginalized realities, particularly for young adolescents of color. An often unquestioned and widely accepted conceptualization of development has situated young people in a framework where they are seen as *less than*, *incapable of*, *dependent on*, *and not ready for*. This framework has produced and maintained a dominant discourse in which childhood is understood through the lens of adults. As the framework operates in its current existence, adults continue to control the child's world across all institutions: through education in a politics of 'official knowledge' and readiness, politically through notions of citizenship, economically through laws and policy, and socially in the family, friendship and religious dynamics. In this research project, I assume that young people are full of capacity to know and act. In stark rejection to the dominant linear stages of development, I among others (Ngo et al.), assert that youth—specifically minoritized young people most often identified as deficient or disengaged in institutions—are fully aware of social injustice, how it affects their lived realities, and "are most compelled to

examine the sociopolitical implications of dominant discourses and engage in social change efforts" (2017, p. 29).

Critical consciousness has been theorized to serve as an 'antidote' to oppression (Watts et. al, 1999). Critical consciousness can serve as a tool to meaningfully navigate and intentionally act within a system that currently operates upon young people. Slowing down to understand how a critical consciousness takes shape is a meaningful endeavor for those struggling to dismantle oppressive structures and policies through the pursuit of social justice.

Statement of Phenomenon and Research Questions

Post-Intentional Phenomenon: Critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research.

Through the development of critical consciousness among young people and adults we can begin to imagine a future in which oppressive educational institutions become sites of disruption to systemic inequity. We know that young people and adults live full lives in and outside of the educational institutions they inhabit, and we know that young people and adults are developing their critical consciousness in and outside of formal educational contexts. The process of developing one's critical consciousness also can lead to an increased capacity for political efficacy. With increased political efficacy, young people and adults can become active participants in the work of creating social justice across schools, neighborhoods, communities, as well as impact state and national policy decisions.

White supremacy is our nation's history—while often strategically veiled under meritocratic narratives—and we are reminded daily of the unstable, dangerous, and polarized state of affairs. For the economically disenfranchised, for Black, Indigenous,

and people of color—for whom our white supremacist institutions do not serve, for the white folks who acknowledge their historical legacy and seek to right their ancestors wrong-doing, this urgency remains omnipresent. In order to move intentionally and effectively in resistance within the existing political arena, we must be critically conscious. We must know and have the capacity to critically reflect, critically act, and exert our political efficacy. This urgency alongside the repetitive shortcoming of educators in effectively fostering their own and young people's critical consciousness compelled me to slow down and examine the process of how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults. This led me to my primary research question:

> RQ1: How might critical consciousness take shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research?

My research is a post-intentional phenomenological study in which I have collected and analyzed data qualitatively to capture moments in which critical consciousness emerges for young people and adults through the process of youth participatory action research (YPAR).

YPAR is a research methodology that engages youth by providing opportunities for individuals (young people and adults) to examine social issues affecting their lives and to determine actions to address or rectify such issues. In YPAR, the interactions among and relationships between young people and adults disrupt traditional power dynamics and hierarchies. Young people and adult allies work collaboratively to interrogate power and injustice as well as to influence one another's capacity to "see differently, to act anew, to provoke change" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 3). I utilized YPAR as a method in my research project because the process of YPAR aims toward

supporting the development of critical consciousness among its participants. In this process, young people co-design a research project, gather data alongside adults, and work as a team to analyze the data and take action on what they learn.

The participants in this study include myself and fifteen young men and women between the ages of 13-16. This research project took place in 2017 over a six-week summer program in which the young people and I co-researched four research questions. The four questions the YPAR collective devised are the secondary research questions for this post-intentional phenomenological study. These secondary questions include:

RQ2: How do young people define health and well-being?

RQ3: What are young people doing in their everyday-lives that contributes to their health and well-being?

RQ4: What barriers do young people face in striving toward health and well-being?

RQ5: What kinds of healing practices are young people using?

Youth Participatory Action Research is a method that has been used to foster critical consciousness. Through examining issues of health and well-being, barriers to health and well-being, and healing practices, the youth researchers gain a greater understanding of the way health disparities impact their individual and collective experiences. Additionally, the youth researchers have agency in being the experts on a social issue that impacts them and execute their agency in choosing to share their research findings with their peers, families, and community members.

The youth research participants in this study proposed immediate, practical contributions related to adolescent health, well-being, and barriers to health and well-

being. The findings from their YPAR project can be immediately taken up by other young people, by youth workers, communities, and educators. It is also apparent that critical consciousness was provoked and produced throughout the six-week YPAR project. This study provides vital information for educators, youth workers, and young people working toward social justice for all, especially young people and communities of color that are continually dehumanized by our nation's white-supremacist institutionalized policies and practices.

Empirical research supports the significance of developing critical consciousness as a necessary endeavor for young people and adults alike who seek to transform their realities and push back against widespread social justice across individual and institutional contexts. The research also suggests that scholars and practitioners alike continue to struggle through this process of fostering their own and one another's critical consciousness. As an emerging scholar in the field, I understand my experience in the graduate program reading, writing, dialoging, and teaching as foundational to the development and deepening of my own critical consciousness. The research suggests there is a need for educational scholars to slow down and examine the process of how critical consciousness takes shape. In this slowing down, it may be possible to begin to articulate and describe how critical consciousness emerges and can be fostered among young people and adults. When educators understand more clearly how the process of developing a critical consciousness might emerge, we may be more strategic and intentional and ultimately more effective in our capacity to support and strengthen the development of critical consciousness in ourselves and in the young people we work with.

Organization of Chapters

In the following chapter, I review the relevant literature providing a brief historicizing of the term "critical consciousness," situate its' significance in the field of education and describe various methods that educational researchers and youth workers have used to foster critical consciousness in young people. In chapter three I describe the methodology (post-intentional phenomenology) and (m)ethod (youth participatory action research) I used to design this study. In chapter four, I present four provocations of critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults, drawing on sources of phenomenological material from the study. In chapter five, I draw on neuroscience research to teach about the brain and body to prepare the reader for the work that occurs in the following chapter. In chapter six, I share productions of critical consciousness taking shape from reading the provocations with a neuroscience lens, theorizing with van der Kolk's (2014) and Menakem's (2017) understandings of trauma and historical trauma. Chapter seven concludes this study by putting ideas from chapters four, five, and six together to generate questions about how critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults and through exploring possibilities of how this work might be taken up in ways that might afford us greater space in our nervous systems, that might allow us to discover ways to settle our bodies, and provide us with opportunities to better align our actions with social-justice commitments, beliefs and values.

Chapter 2

Relevant Literature

The purpose of my literature review is to provide a brief historical tracing of the term critical consciousness and to situate its significance within the field of education. I then briefly describe how what educational researchers and sociologists have theorized supports the development of critical consciousness in young people. Then I describe various methods (critical service learning, Photovoice, career development, and community-based arts programs) researchers have used to understand the process of fostering critical consciousness. Finally, I describe how youth participatory action research aligns with what has been theorized to support the development of critical consciousness.

Critical Consciousness

The term "critical consciousness" can be traced to Paulo Freire's work (1970/1974). Freire, a passionate educator, worked with illiterate adults in rural areas who were alienated and ruled by Brazil's elite. Freire believed that the oppressed held solutions that would lead toward an open society for Brazil's future. He proposed a process of education that enabled the people "to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in the new cultural climate" (1974, p. 13). Freire conceptualized a form of education that would take into account "the various levels at which the Brazilian people perceived their reality, as being of the greatest importance for the process of their humanization" (1974, p. 13). As a means to analyze historically and culturally conditioned levels of understanding, Freire described three levels of consciousness. The first level, *semi-intransitivity of consciousness*, is characterized by

people's interests being centered on their survival where their sphere of perception is limited beyond their biological needs. The second level of consciousness, *naive transitivity*, involves a period "characterized by an over-simplification of problems; by nostalgia for the past," by underestimating one's peers, by settling with one's circumstances, and by strong emotions (1974, p. 14). Freire described most of Brazil's urban centers as dominated by the naive transitivity level of consciousness in which there was widespread acknowledgement of disparity but very little sense of hope or movement to change one's own or greater society's circumstances. The third level of consciousness Freire describes as *critical transitivity*. The critically transitive consciousness is constituted by depth in interpretation of problems, by investigation into problems and openness to revision, by dialogue, by acceptance of what is valid in old and new (1974). Freire describes authentically democratic regimes as critically transitive, as opposed to passive inaction—which characterized the militarily authoritarian state in Brazil. Freire believed that moving from naive transitivity to critical transitivity could not occur without active, dialogic education centered on social and political responsibility.

Freire (1970) rejected traditional education models, describing traditional models using a banking metaphor in which the teacher is positioned as an expert who is responsible for depositing knowledge into the minds of students and where students are passive receptacles for such knowledge. Determined to disrupt the hierarchical tradition, Freire implemented "culture circles" while working to move illiterate adults from naive to critical transitivity.

> Instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were 'broken down' and 'codified' into learning units (1974, p. 40).

Freire held fast to the belief that the role of humankind is not just to be in the world but to engage with the world and that knowledge exists as a result of our relation to reality. With this belief, Freire was certain that people were capable of knowing, whether or not they were literate. For Freire, a transcendental opportunity existed through people's ability to connect knowledge with causality, arguing a correlation between causality and critical consciousness. Freire's method for education for critical consciousness was centered on dialogue, in which participants held horizontal relationships and were empathetic and engaged in joint critical reflection and action.

Critical Consciousness in the Field

In the late 80s and early 90s a reform movement began to take shape that sought to revise teacher preparation programs with a commitment to social justice and equity. Ladson-Billings' initial theorizing (1995) of c*ulturally relevant pedagogy*, was intended to support the success of educators teaching African American students. Ladson-Billings was working against studies that continued to reproduce existing inequities, where the goal of education continues a narrative of "how to 'fit' students constructed as 'other' by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a meritocracy" (1995, p. 467). Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical model that addresses student achievement, affirms students' cultural identities, and develops critical perspectives to challenge social inequities.

At the same time, Ladson-Billings' work has been heavily critiqued for its focus on student achievement, largely because student achievement is often conceptualized as synonymous with academic achievement, increasingly measured by student test scores in the era of No Child Left Behind. Macro-level (structural and policy) changes have

contributed to a narrowing discourse surrounding the purpose of education and the role of schooling. These macro-level initiatives have perpetuated very real and harmful realities that are revealed when examining micro-level school contexts and the experiences of individual students, particularly in urban settings. When schools' and teachers' effectiveness are measured solely—or overwhelmingly, by the performance of their students on standardized tests, we are left with a wide array of problems. One of the core problems is a narrowing definition of what academic success is, can, and ought to be. Ladson-Billings acknowledges the concern, citing Delpit (1992), in problematizing the paradox of both the need to resist the significance placed on standardized testing while also working within educational contexts where testing has always and will continue to have real implications for the lives of our students.

> Whether or not scholars can agree on the significance of standardized tests, their meaning in the real world serves to rank and characterize both schools and individuals. Thus, teachers in urban schools are compelled to demonstrate their students can achieve literacy and numeracy (Delpit, 1992). No matter how good a fit develops between home and school culture, students must achieve. No theory of pedagogy can escape this reality (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 475).

The existing macro-educational context of our time continues to produce a narrow conceptualization of academic achievement, one that does not include a holistic view of students—their ability to read, write, dialogue, ask questions, solve complex problems, and interact with one another. Ladson-Billings did not have it wrong; it is the responsibility of educators to support students in successfully navigating our education system—and testing has always been a part of that process. However, Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy operates under the assumption that the conceptualization of academic achievement is not limited to the performance of students on standardized tests.

Culturally relevant pedagogy has been actualized into practice more widely since the 1990s, oftentimes with equally problematic implementation, realization, and attention to the three core tenets. A tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy that continues to be under-addressed in its enactment is the development of a sociopolitical consciousness. As educational scholars observe and study educators attempting to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms, more often than not two issues arise related to the third tenet, development of a sociopolitical consciousness. First, teachers fall short on supporting students' ability to foster critical perspectives and second, perhaps as a seemingly obvious explanation for the first issue, teachers struggle to develop their own critical consciousness.

In Ladson-Billings' 2014 article *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix*, she reflects that teachers "rarely pushed students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have direct impact on their lives and communities" (p. 78). Developing a sociopolitical consciousness involves recognizing how historical and sociopolitical contexts under-gird our current experiences and struggles (Freire, 1970/1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ngo et al., 2017). An understanding of how historical and sociopolitical forces shape our everyday lived experiences can be mobilized into social action. Through the development of a critical consciousness, students can be empowered to act—to develop individual and collective agency as a means of resisting oppressive conditions and working toward social justice. So what is preventing teachers from supporting the capacity in students' to foster critical perspectives?

More than ten years after her initial theorizing of culturally relevant pedagogy Ladson-Billings came out with her piece, *Yes, but How Do We Do It?* In the chapter, she

addresses a significant problem for enacting culturally relevant pedagogy: that teachers often haven't developed a sociopolitical consciousness of their own. Ladson-Billings writes,

> When I talk to teachers about economic disparities, they rarely link these disparities with issues of race, class, and gender. Thus, the first thing teachers must do is educate themselves about both the local sociopolitical issues of their school community and the larger sociopolitical issues that impinge upon their students' lives (2006, p. 37).

Ladson-Billings goes on to discuss that the teacher must also support students in applying the skills they learn to better understand and critique their social position and context. Sociocultural theorists have reiterated the importance of adults working with youth developing their own critical consciousness.

Ladson-Billings describes three necessary criteria for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. First, educators must have the capacity to develop students academically, second, educators must demonstrate a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and third educators must foster the development of a sociopolitical consciousness. Educators struggle to implement culturally relevant pedagogy without falling short of all three of its primary tenets. Educators struggle to conceptualize academic success without overly relying on the outcomes of their students' performance on standardized tests—in large part because of the pervasive discourse surrounding education and the trickle down of high-stakes accountability measures that operate in schools and classrooms. Even educators who are able to support their students' academic success while nurturing and supporting cultural competence, struggle to support students in fostering a critical consciousness. One conceivable explanation for this shortcoming may have to do with teachers' development of their own critical consciousness. While

Ladson-Billings maintains that the tenets of her theory were well-intended and empirically supported, she acknowledges the expansive spectrum for which her theory has been taken up by scholars in higher education and practitioners in k-12 settings and the shortcomings of theorizing and implementation she and others repeatedly bear witness to.

Theories for Supporting the Development of Critical Consciousness

Research suggests critical consciousness has been fostered through a variety of methods including critical service learning, career development, Photovoice methods, community-based arts programs, as well as through youth participatory action research. Below I describe how critical consciousness is fostered in each of these methods, paying particular attention to how the methods fit with the core components (critical reflection, political efficacy, critical action) of critical consciousness *(See Table 1)*. In addition to the core components, I describe the relationship between the adults and young people working together in each of the methods. Situating young people as often precariously positioned with the U.S. context, it was important for me to lay out what the interactions and relationships of young people and adults look like across the methods.

Table 1: Approaches for Fostering Critical Consciousness

	Critical Reflection	Political Efficacy	Critical Action	Adult/Youth Interaction
Critical Service Learning	Participants question assumptions, values and critique the impact of their service. Students examine how their service fits in the context of larger social, political, and economic forces.	Goal is praxis (reflection and action) directed at addressing and contributing toward the dismantling of structural inequality.	Participants are agents of change through service. The service must be determined with the community and benefit both the participants and community being "served."	Power is distributed among all participants. Self-awareness, identity exploration, personal histories, and experiences of privilege and oppression are important for effective and authentic relationships
Photovoice	Participants move from passive adaptation toward cognitive awakening and intentions to act.	Through the process of taking, writing and sharing photo stories, participants and community members see change as possible.	Participants co-determine guidelines and goals for project. Participants take photos and accompanying texts, dialogue and share their photos and stories with one another and the larger community.	A professional group process facilitator leads participants. Professional is specialized in using stories and dialogue to bring about change.
Career Development	Measured quantitatively through Likert type scale. Lower SDO scores associated with greater progress in career development.	Urban adolescents may best engage with career development process by maintaining a critical awareness of an opportunity structure that is unjust and situating their individual agency and effort within a critical reading of the opportunity structure.	Study is not "active," rather measures students critical consciousness determined by examining levels of sociopolitical analysis and sociopolitical control.	Traditional researcher/participant relationship maintained.
Community Based Arts Programs (Literary, Theatre, Digital Media)	Multimodal opportunities for reflection and expression that promote understanding one's life in relation to one's surroundings.	Participants systematically collect, analyze, and disseminate knowledge, contributing to social transformation.	The performance of spoken word, theatre, and public display and sharing of digital media contribute to expanding community awareness and knowledge.	Leadership and power are negotiated throughout. Adults are encouraged to facilitate and scaffold in order to deepen complex understandings as well as strengthen the impact of production and performances.
Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)	Young people learn conditions of injustice are produced, designed to privilege and oppress. These conditions are challengeable and thus changeable.	YPAR is formal resistance that leads to transformation, systematic and institutional change to promote social justice.	Through research, young people critically examine social institutions and processes influencing their lived realities. This process leads to transformation that allows individuals to see differently, act anew, and to provoke change.	The "researcher" is not a lone investigator rather young people and adult allies form a research collective. Young people are viewed and treated with having the capacity and agency to analyze their social context, to engage critical research, to challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation.
Summary	The social analysis and moral rejection of societal inequities, such as the social, economic, racial/ethnic, gender, inequities that constrain well-being and human agency.	The perceived capacity to effect social and political change by individual and/or collective activism.	Individual or collective action taken to change unjust aspects of society.	Relationships are authentic, collaborative, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial.

I begin by describing Critical Service Learning as a method that has been utilized to foster critical consciousness. I go on to describe Photovoice, followed by career development and finally community-based arts programs as methods utilized to measure or foster critical consciousness. I close this section by making a case for youth participatory action research as an important and well-aligned method for young people and adults hoping to foster critical consciousness in themselves and one another.

Critical Service-Learning

Critical service-learning (CSL) is distinct form of community service and traditional service learning. The goal of CSL is "to deconstruct systems of power so the need for service and the inequalities that create and sustain them are dismantled," (Mitchell, 2008, p. 50). In CSL, the roles of all participants are re-imagined. In CSL power is re-distributed equitably among teachers, students, and community members so that all participants in the project are mutual beneficiaries of the engagement. In order for effective and authentic relationships among participants to form, participants must explore their identities, their personal histories, and their experiences of privilege and oppression. Working toward self-awareness, participants question their assumptions and values, as well as pay attention to the impact and implication of their actions. Working individually and collaboratively, participants build authentic and trusting relationships as they share, challenge, question and integrate one another's perspectives. In CSL projects, participants see themselves as agents of social change and it is through service that participants address and respond to injustice within the community. CSL participants investigate the links between those they 'serve' to the institutional structures and policies producing their lived experiences. Participants engage in critical reflection as they

analyze their work, understanding the possibilities for social change alongside the potential for perpetuating systems of inequality through service. Through CSL, participants develop a critical consciousness.

> Critical service-learning pedagogy fosters a critical consciousness, allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming these problems (2008, p. 54).

CSL has been summarized as an approach aimed at becoming conscious of and able to critique social systems through motivating participants to analyze their experiences as they take action and make change (Pompa, 2002).

Photovoice

Photovoice is a Freirian-based (1970/2000, 1973/2002) process that has three primary objectives, "(a) to engage people in active listening and dialogue, (b) to create a safe environment for introspection and critical reflection, and (c) to move people toward action" (Carlson et. al, 2006, p. 838). A fourth goal was added by Wang and Burris (1994) "to inform the broader, more powerful society to help facilitate community changes" (2006, p. 838). The photovoice project conducted by health practitioners Carlson, Engebretson, and Chamberlain in 2006 involved a retrospective ethnographic analysis of a project that took place over five weeks in 2000. During this period, members of one African American community took photographs of things in the community they were proud of and things they wanted to change, and then wrote accompanying stories. The goal of the photovoice project was to document community health concerns and engage community residents in dialogue intended to ignite a shared vision and prioritized agenda to improve the health of the community. The investigators

used van Leeuwen (2001) iconography as a strategy to analyze photographs. Cultural anthropology and organizational psychology theories were drawn upon to develop a framework for understanding "how culture is internalized and manifest into patterns of behavior" (p. 842). The theories that guided the interpretation of data were:

> (a)That cultural norms manifest as characteristic or typical patterns of thought and behavior among a group of individuals based on shared or similar social experiences, (b) that cultural norms of interpretation represent the cognitive-emotional process of creating meaning that is shaped by these shared social experiences, and (c) that every behavior elicits an emotional response and every emotion elicits a behavioral response, which are shaped by these cultural norms of interpretation (2006, p. 842).

Critical thinking and reflection were prevalent throughout each stage of the photovoice project, including initial stages involving decisions of what to photograph, developing a story that captures its' significance, sharing and viewing one another's photos and stories, as well as engaging in group dialogue of introspection. Through the photovoice project process, the investigators identified varying levels of critical consciousness, in which participants moved from passive adaptation to emotional engagement, cognitive awakening, and toward intentions to act. In the passive adaptation stage, participant narratives and emotions were categorized as angry and hopeless. While participants engaged in telling and listening to one another's stories, the level of critical consciousness of participants increased through emotional engagement evidenced by similar emotions such as anger and despair, however, with capacity to question the status quo. While engaging in critical reflection about their photovoice project experience, participants shifted to a higher level of critical consciousness described as cognitive awakening. At this level of critical consciousness, participants acknowledged their responsibility and participation in their social realities. Finally, through ongoing dialogue

participants reached the highest level of critical consciousness characterized by intentions to act. In this stage, participants were able to acknowledge their responsibility in being a part of the solution while envisioning a more hopeful future. The photovoice project was implemented to facilitate a social process that resulted in higher levels of critical consciousness. The investigators' findings suggest "active facilitation is necessary to engage and maintain participation in historically marginalized and oppressed communities" (2006, p. 850). The investigators suggest conceptualizing critical consciousness as a social process of shifting cultural norms, from dependency to interdependency, has practical implications for meaningful community-based participatory work.

Critical Consciousness and Career Development

Diemer and Blustein's quantitative study (2006), *Critical consciousness and career development among urban youth*, explored the role of critical consciousness in predicting career development among urban high school students. The 220 participants in their study attended two high schools in the Northeastern United States, primarily comprised of students of color from poor and working-class neighborhoods. Diemer and Blustein define critical consciousness as "the capacity to recognize and overcome sociopolitical barriers" (p. 220). They measured critical consciousness by examining students' level of sociopolitical analysis and sociopolitical control through a Likert-type format. In examining sociopolitical analysis, Diemer and Blustein use the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) construct.

> SDO represents an endorsement of group-based social inequality and dominance and oppression wherein one hegemonic group enjoys disproportionate status, power, and material well-being over other oppressed groups (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

When measuring sociopolitical analysis, Diemer and Blustein examined the extent to which students subscribed to or rejected an ideology in which SDO is deeply embedded. When examining students' sociopolitical control, Diemer and Blustein examined students' self-efficacy beliefs in regard to agency within one's sociopolitical environment. They also measured students' progress in career development by examining students' vocational identity, career commitment, and work salience. Using correlational analyses, Diemer and Blustein explored the relationships between the two critical consciousness variables (sociopolitical analysis, sociopolitical control) and the three career development variables (vocational identity, career commitment, work salience). Their findings suggest a statistically significant relationship exists between urban adolescents' critical consciousness and career development. Diemer and Blustein suggest,

> Critical consciousness may serve as an internal resource that assists urban adolescents in analyzing and acting to achieve desired outcomes within an environment of inequitable access to resources and racial discrimination (2006, p, 229).

Diemer and Blustein's study is valuable for researchers who are interested in defining and measuring critical consciousness among youth. Examining students' level of sociopolitical analysis and sociopolitical control were tools Diemer and Blustein used to measure critical consciousness. The quantitative nature of this study does not serve to disrupt the typical hierarchical relationship between researchers and participants. Studies such as this are not active in their design—participants and researchers are *not* co-creating knowledge, taking critical action and critically reflecting throughout the duration of the study. Rather, studies such as this are important for determining ways to measure critical consciousness as well as to suggest the significance critical consciousness plays in

an individual's sense of agency and self-efficacy within inequitable sociopolitical contexts.

Community-Based Arts Programs

Ngo, Lewis, and Maloney Leaf provide a comprehensive review of community-based arts programs that seek to foster sociopolitical consciousness with minoritized youth (2017). The authors' use of the term "minoritized" rather than minority or youth of color is purposeful.

> We use 'minoritized'... to emphasize the (ongoing) process of marginalization based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion and dis/ability, among other dimensions of difference that are socially constructed in specific societal contexts (2017, p. 4).

Focusing on three areas of arts: literary, theatre, and digital media, the authors aim to provide an overview of practices that may provide important insights for those whose work is aimed toward promoting sociopolitical consciousness and addressing educational disparities. The authors describe three dimensions of sociopolitical consciousness that emerged from their review: identification, mobilization, and cosmopolitanism. The first dimension, identification, is described as "'naming' to promote awareness and understanding or express personal experiences" (p. 5). Mobilization, the second dimension of sociopolitical consciousness, "includes action toward internal or external change" (p. 6). And cosmopolitanism, the third dimension, "focuses on exploring belonging across difference" (p. 6). Many of the community-based art programs the authors evaluated overlapped among the identification and mobilization dimensions. Literary arts programs involved spoken-word performances where youth used their words and bodies to name injustices and to construct counter-narratives. The production and performance of spoken word programs supported youth in identifying and responding to

"society's construction of youth identity" as well as supported youth to "reclaim their identity as commendable and worth listening to" (p. 8). Community-based theatre arts programs provided spaces for youth to explore their own and others identities and experiences through storytelling, a process that facilitated internal reflection and awareness. Digital media arts programs provided space for young people to explore the multiplicities of their identities through digital storytelling.

> Digital storytelling decenters logocentric forms of storytelling and privileges visual and oral forms in ways that promoted intergenerational communication in communities with strong oral traditions (Iseke & Moore, 2011; Ngo, Lewis, Maloney Leaf, 2017, p. 11).

Incorporating Freire's (1970/2005) notions of critical consciousness and Ladson-Billings (1995) notion of sociopolitical consciousness, Ngo et. al. provide a comprehensive review of how sociopolitical consciousness is fostered with minoritized youth through community-based arts programs. The authors' findings suggest that literary, theatre and digital media arts programs support youth to "name in order to re-present and share their identities, mobilize for social transformation, and navigate belonging and difference as translocal or cosmopolitan youth" (p. 26). While the findings of their comprehensive review were primarily positive and hopeful, the authors caution that the work of fostering sociopolitical consciousness is dangerous and must be implemented with caution and compassion. The authors offer reflective questions for those engaged in work intended to foster sociopolitical consciousness.

> What are the roles of staff in the programs? How do dimensions of difference such as class, race, ethnicity, gender and their intersections (among others) enhance or complicate the pedagogical process? As educators, when we ask youth to tell their stories, take action, and engage with communities, how are we prepared to respond to the potential emotional and physical impact on the youth? (2017, p. 28)

The community-based literary, theatre, and digital media arts programs fostered sociopolitical consciousness through the implementation of critical reflection, critical action, and careful examination and negotiation of power among youth and adult interactions and relationships.

CSL, Photovoice, career development, and community-based arts program methods provide important insights about practices that have been used to foster critical consciousness with young people. Each method reviewed provides evidence that critical consciousness takes shape through critical reflection and critical action. With the exception of the career development study, each method described the importance of examining and disrupting traditional hierarchies among researchers and participants, adults and young people through careful examination and commitment to negotiating power through dialogic and reciprocal relationships. When young people are supported in awakening their critical consciousness, the possibility for young people to interpret their realities through a lens in which they are capable of both personal and social transformation emerges. Investigating, critiquing, and taking social action are practices that can be personally and collectively liberatory as well contribute toward creating a future that is more just.

In the following section, I make a case for youth participatory action research as an important and well-aligned method for young people and adults hoping to foster critical consciousness in themselves and one another.

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

Freire (1993) used the term praxis to mean the critical and collective inquiry, reflection and action focused on "reading" and speaking back to the realities of one's

world. Cammarota & Fine describe youth participatory action research (YPAR) *as* praxis, "YPAR provides young people with opportunities to study social problems affecting their lives and then determine actions to rectify these problems" (2008, p. 2). Through YPAR, young people engage in formal resistance that is designed with the goal of transformation. Transformation is possible on both a micro and macro level. Transformation on a micro level describes change that occurs within an individual, among a collective, as well as with whom the research is shared (most often the community). Micro level transformation occurs through processes involving identification of social inequities, awareness of one's self (identities and positionalities), awareness of one's agency, through dialogue, through critical action and reflection. Transformation is possible on the macro level when systems and institutions are confronted and in turn produce greater justice. Some of the ways youth have promoted social justice include community organizing, demonstrations, public service announcements, producing documentaries, taking and displaying photos with accompanying texts, spoken word performances, hip-hop concerts, formal presentations in community spaces etc. Through YPAR, young people learn "conditions of injustice are produced, not natural; are designed to privilege and oppress; but are ultimately challengeable and thus changeable" (2008, p. 2). In YPAR, the interactions among and relationships between young people and adults disrupt traditional power dynamics. Young people and adult allies work collaboratively to interrogate power and injustice as well as to influence one another's capacity to "see differently, to act anew, to provoke change" (2008, p. 3).

In what follows, I review two YPAR projects (*Echoes* and *Different Eyes/Open Eyes*) to demonstrate some of the ways critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults. This examination is grounded in the belief that YPAR may provide an authentic space for slowing down to examine how critical consciousness takes shape. It aims to inform the types of interactions and relationships that are possible between young people and adults engaged in struggling for social justice. Simultaneously, it aims to reveal the possibilities of personal and collective transformation through YPAR.

Echoes.

In 2003, youth interested in writing, performing, and/or social justice convened to create a "contact zone," with the purpose of creating a performance of research, poetry and movement to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Drawing on Torre (2006), Pratt (1991), and Anzaldua (1987), the "contact zone," became defined as "a messy social space where differently situated people 'meet, clash, and grapple with each other' across their varying relationships to power" (Torre, M. E. & Fine, M. et al., 2008, p. 25). The project, *Echoes*, included high school students, college students, graduate students, activists, faculty, lawyers, and writers, all of whom imported "distinct situated knowledges, with very differently marked bodies, carrying heavy and light loads of biography, privilege, and oppression of racial injustice" (p. 26). By 2004, the participants created a performance that showcased the layers of their collaborative research and knowledge for a large audience who would bear witness "to the unfulfilled promise of Brown" (p. 33).

Reflecting on how YPAR in the contact zones affected the consciousness and political work of youth they worked with, the authors offer key insights. First, the project

allowed participants "to connect 'personal struggles' with historic struggles for justice" (p. 33). During the project, youth researchers worked with a feminist lawyer to historicize the impact of the *Brown* decision on a number of movements including civil rights, feminism, disability rights etc. One of the spoken word and youth researchers, Amir, eventually shared his special education status through writing about his experiences as an African American student in a desegregated school, siloed by a special education label into special education classes. His writing and performance have been shared over time in a variety of contexts, sparking multiple "confessionals from youth, parents, community members and educators about the scars of education" and about teachers who changed their trajectories (p. 36). Second, the project promoted a process "to convert individual experiences of pain and oppression into structural analysis and demands for justice" (p. 36). Tahini, a Palestinian-American young woman and spoken word-artist in the project, wrote a poem that served to disrupt dominant fear based post-9/11 narratives while insisting readers and listeners acknowledge her everyday experiences centered on oppressive histories, policies and practices. Third, the project created opportunities for participants "to interrogate the unfairness of privilege" (p. 37). *Echoes* was unique in that it was not designed to bring together demographically similar people nor to create a safe space to challenge injustice, rather the project brought together very diverse youth and adults, whose privilege and power varied significantly. Elinor, a white participant from the suburbs, wrote with rage about racialized practices visible in her educational context. Elinor reflected that "not speaking up against racially inequitable settings could not be justified as neutrality" (p. 39). The authors note that the deconstruction of privilege was critical to their project in the contact zone, "if privilege is

allowed to sit unchallenged, the seemingly integrated spaces will dangerously reproduce the damage of social stratification and injustice" (p. 40). Finally, the project served "to mitigate activist research into youth organizing movements for social justice" (p. 40). The diverse bodies, positionalities, and identities of the participants in the project collectively created a space in which multiple perspectives were able to both "disarticulate the embodied workings, perversions, benefits and assaults of social injustice" as well as able to "rearticulate [together] a vision of what could be" (p. 40).

Different Eyes/Open Eyes.

The participants of this community-based participatory action research project retrospectively reflected on their experiences critically investigating their everyday lives in their Lower East Side neighborhood of New York City. Their title *Different Eyes/Open Eyes* evolved from discussions of the participatory action research process.

> As a process of 'opening' our own eyes and seeing the world with 'different eyes,' coupled with a desire to open others' eyes. We propose the metaphor of opening eyes because our collective participatory process pushed us to adopt a more critical perspective in our everyday lives… The metaphor of opening eyes is also relevant to the goals of our project 'Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban women of color' to 'reverse the gaze,' speak back to problematic misrepresentations, and untangle the relationship between stereotypes and the gentrification/disinvestment of our neighborhood (Cahill, C. et al., 2008, p. 90).

Cahill et. al. reflect specifically on three openings: 1) researching our home community, 2) personal transformation and 3) participatory action research as a catalyst for change.

The first opening "researching our home community," required the participants to research their own lives by carefully examining their everyday experiences within their neighborhood. The process involved studying the changes in their Lower East Side neighborhood and interrogating how economic, political, and social disparities took shape within the context of their community. As the participants discussed their personal and

collective experiences in the neighborhood, the topics of conversation shifted from histories, reputations, demographics, to gentrification. At times the participants found themselves distressed by their findings.

> Placing gentrification in the larger context of the cycle of global economic restructuring and making sense of the repercussions for our families and our community was really upsetting (Cahill, C. et al., 2008, p. 103).

While acknowledging the process was at times painful, the authors also reflected on how the participatory action research project "provided a way for [them] to engage and use this knowledge productively rather than be demoralized by it" and because the participants viewed themselves as stakeholders, they were motivated to learn more (p. 103). The participants, who each identified as women of color, felt they fit the "target audience" for preventative and at-risk programs which they saw as responsible for perpetuating oversimplified, reductionist, and limiting stereotypes through their marketing and program design. The participants collectively decided that their project, "Fed Up Honeys" would "speak back" to stereotypes (p. 104). The participants described these initial phases of the participatory action research project as the awakening of their critical consciousness.

The second opening "personal transformation," involved autobiographical writings in which the participants grappled with their "contradictory" selves, attempting to capture in words the "push and pull" they each experienced as they negotiated the contradictions of their everyday lives (p. 111). The participants remarked that the participatory action research project offered opportunities to critically reflect on their multifaceted identities, opening their eyes to new ways of understanding themselves and their worlds. Drawing on Freire's notion of conscientization, the authors describe the

importance of dialogue throughout the participatory action research project, where the participants collectively act, share, and process together becoming aware of how their "personal experiences are connected to broader social problems" (p. 112). Through dialogic process, the participants described a sense of solidarity with one another as well as reflected the possibility for healing to occur.

> The collective critical reflection process of PAR provided a space for expressing and releasing emotions and working through the pain and confusion of personal and shared experiences in a supportive setting (Cahill, C. et al., 2008, p. 112).

As the participants validated one another's experiences of structural racism and poverty, they collectively reconstructed what it means to be a young urban woman of color. The women found DuBois (1989) "double consciousness" to be helpful during this stage.

> Acknowledging the power of stereotypes, 'as expectations of who we should be or who we will be,' as an 'axis around which everything revolves,' we identified examples of how we use, relate to, and resist stereotypes and how we 'define ourselves against and/or through stereotypes' (cf. Rios-Moore et al., 2004, p. 113).

Through the process of deconstructing stereotypes, the participants articulated how stereotypes can lead to the ways in which young women explain and understand themselves and others as well as the world they inhabit. Through research, the participants "tried to untangle the ways violent mischaracterizations seeped into [their] consciousness," the ways in which they understood themselves so that they could see more clearly with 'different eyes.'

The third opening "participatory action research as a catalyst for change," involved participants' vision and action for a more just future. The participants collectively thought through how to make change in their everyday lives and in their community. The participants created a proposal for "community building needs from a

young womyn's perspective" where they advocated for community participation in the development of their neighborhood. The participants wrote the *Makes Me Mad* report, which included a list of practical solutions. They created a sticker campaign, two websites, a 'youth friendly' research report, book chapters, and presented at conferences, schools and local community-based organizations. Through participatory action research, the participants created research products (stickers), public forums (website), and most importantly took an active role in the revitalization of their community.

The *Echoes* and *Different Eyes/Open Eyes* projects are two exemplary YPAR projects. These studies teach us that young people are capable of researching social issues that are significant to their everyday lives. These studies teach us that when young people learn, through research, to connect their personal lived experiences to broader social policies and contexts, that they are better equipped to navigate the realities of their everyday lives as well as to act meaningfully against systems and structures producing social inequality. These studies teach us that young people are significantly impacted by society's social inequities and can and ought to be invited to collectively struggle for social justice. While personal and social transformation is a primary goal of YPAR, YPAR is not a neutral process—it is often messy and complex and should be approached delicately, with great care, intentionality, and caution.

In YPAR, the role of the researcher is not an isolated individual but rather individuals who form a collective determined to analyze (a) social issue(s) relevant to their lives and to challenge and resist the practices and systems shaping and producing their lived experiences of the social issue(s) under investigation. As young people reflect upon, investigate, and share their lived experiences, there is significant potential for

traumatic experiences to surface. Additionally, young people and adults enter YPAR projects with preconceived understandings of themselves, their experiences, their personal and collective histories, as well as preconceived understandings of others. As hooks (1991) and Ngo et al. (2017) point out, "Dominant storylines colonize our imaginations and their repetition reinforce and serve the interests of those who are most powerful—white, cis-gendered males" (p. 27). It is possible that young people and adults collaborating together may have prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, YPAR requires that adults and young people investigate and challenge their own and one another's attitudes so the collective does not unintentionally reinforce dominant narratives. Additionally, adults facilitating YPAR projects must critically reflect on their positionality and the multiplicity of identities they embody while working with young people who share and do not share facets of these identities. These reflections should meaningfully and intentionally inform the adult facilitator's interactions and relationships with the young people they work with. Throughout the YPAR process, adults must critically reflect on their role, their relationships, and their responses to young people with whom they are learning from and with. Ngo et al. suggest "research needs to examine the difficulty of constructing supposedly 'safe' spaces for minoritized young people to share experiences of oppression" (p. 27). Researchers engaging YPAR have the potential to provide important contributions to the scholarship Ngo et. al. describe, by critically reflecting and analyzing the context and moments of the YPAR process in which young people share their stories, as well as engaging young people in discussions reflecting on these moments.

YPAR provides young people and adults with the opportunity to learn from and with one another by critically examining the issues of utmost significance in their lives. The possibility for YPAR to be personally and socially transformative are two significant outcomes that promote social justice. In YPAR, young people are intellectual, capable, and agentic researchers. Let us turn to Cannella's succinct and powerful explanation of the exceptional potential of YPAR.

> The projects embrace the complexity of human identity. Each of these projects invites participants to articulate and embody who they are as whole people—their gender, race, ethnicity, geography, languages, and politics. Inherent in this is a recognition that these facets of identity are not separate from processes of learning and teaching. Rather, our subjectivities serve as the basis for who people are, how they make meaning as they learn, and how they embody knowledge as teachers (2008, p. 191).

While there any many methods, some of which I outlined in this chapter, that can be utilized to study how critical consciousness takes shape, I argue that youth participatory action research is most aligned across all three core components of critical consciousness. YPAR also intentionally flattens the traditional hierarchies between young people and adults that so often dehumanizes young people by shaping what they can *do* and who they can *be*. The primary purpose of engaging YPAR is not to uphold the quality or product of the research, but to prioritize the lived experiences of young people as a means to support them in meaningfully connecting to their worlds.

Summary

After a brief historicizing of the term critical consciousness, I described the significance of critical consciousness to educational theories; theories developed to transform the educational experiences and opportunities of students who have been and continue to be marginalized by our educational institutions. The literature supports the

development of a critical consciousness among both educators and students as vital to transforming educational experiences and opportunities for historically marginalized students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this study I sought to explore how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults engaged in a process of youth participatory action research (YPAR). I investigated how the phenomenon was provoked and produced as I collaborated with young people on a YPAR project over the course of a six-week summer program in the summer of 2017. In this chapter, I describe the methodology I used to design this study. Toward the end of this chapter, I present a summary of findings for the secondary research questions explored throughout the six-week summer program where young people participated in the youth participatory action research project.

In post-intentional phenomenology, the researcher is asked to craft an overarching primary question that it is more philosophical in nature and then a few secondary research questions that are more specific and help guide the process of gathering phenomenological material. My primary research question is explored as it takes shape within a particular place, space, and time (Vagle, 2014). My secondary research questions align with the data collection method I utilized with young people participating in a youth participatory action research project. I collaborated with the Executive Director at the research site to create guiding questions for the YPAR project. Young people were invited to participate in this study based on their participation in a summer program offered by a community-based organization. The primary and secondary research questions are as follows:

Primary Research Question (Post-Intentional Phenomenology):

1. How might critical consciousness take shape for young people and adults?

Secondary Research Questions (YPAR):

1. How do young people define health and well-being?
2. What are young people doing on an everyday basis that contributes to their health and well-being?
3. What barriers to health and well-being do young people face?
4. What healing strategies do young people use?

In what follows I provide a brief historicizing of phenomenology as Vagle's (2014, 2018) post-intentional phenomenology grows out of this earlier tradition. I then describe how post-intentional phenomenology is related to and distinctly unique from early phenomenology in a number of ways. Finally, I describe why I have chosen to use post-intentional phenomenology to open up possibilities for understanding how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults engaged in YPAR.

What is Phenomenology?

Phenomenology can be described philosophically and methodologically. In order to engage phenomenology as methodology, it is helpful to trace the origins and understand the philosophical commitments of phenomenology. In addition to being philosophical and methodological, phenomenology is an orientation toward "a way of being, becoming, living, and moving through the world" (2014, p.12). Vagle captures what it means to live phenomenologically is helpful for orienting oneself to this work.

> It means to be profoundly present in our living—to leave no stone unturned; to slow down in order to open up, to dwell with our surroundings amidst the harried pace we may keep; to remain open; to know that there is 'never, nothing' going on and that we can never grasp all that is going on; and to know that our living is always a never-ending work in progress (2014, p. 12).

Disrupting Western philosophical tradition rooted in Cartesian thought, early phenomenology emerged as an effort to capture the essences of pure experience. Husserl, the father of phenomenology, sought to escape the mind-body dualism initiated by Descartes, who coined "I think, therefore I am." Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was an epistemological investigation of the emergence of knowledge. Husserl leaves Descartes' mind-body dualism situating knowledge as the intentional relations from subject to the experiential world. Husserlian phenomenology is the study of the complex intentional relations between subject and objects—phenomena, that are always already meaningfully connected so much so that they cannot be separated from one another or conceptualized in isolation (Vagle, 2014). Although Husserl made an incredible distinction within Western philosophy, his conception continued to situate the relationship such that it proceeds from the individual (subject, "I", ego) out toward the world (Vagle, 2014). While Husserl was asking how the being of things are constituted as intentional objects in consciousness (an epistemological project), later phenomenologists shifted to further focus on the meaning derived from the intentional relationships.

As phenomenology has continued to develop, leading philosophers such as Heidegger shifted phenomenology away from essencing toward a question of interpretation and being. In hermeneutic interpretive phenomenology, it is not the knowledge *of* phenomena, rather the meaning of their being. For Heidegger, phenomenon in phenomenology means *that which becomes manifest for us* (Vagle, 2014). Heidegger departs from Husserlian phenomenology where phenomena are understood no longer as directed from subjects out into the world, rather phenomena are understood as coming into being and through language as humans relate with things and one another in the

world (Vagle, 2014). Husserl was studying intentional relations between subjects and objects with a focused epistemological approach of how one comes to know the phenomena, where the directionality emanates from the subject to the object. Heidegger continued the study of intentional relations between subjects and objects but understood that subjects were always already affected by objects in the world.

This shifted meaning deriving from epistemological knowing to meaning deriving from ontological being. For Heidegger, the intentional relations between subject and objects are always producing and shaping one another. If I were to describe who I am, it would be impossible for me to separate myself from my intentional relationships with the world. For the entirety of my life, I have been and am a daughter. My intentional relations with my parents are a part of who I am as I experience myself. As that relation changes over time, my experience of myself also changes. While Husserl studied the essence of a phenomenon, Heidegger focused on interpretations of manifestations and appearances of phenomena.

Post-Intentional Phenomenology

Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology stems from hermeneutic interpretivist philosophy but branches out in significant ways. For Vagle, the post in post-intentional refers to post-structural commitments. Post-structuralists tend to understand knowledge as incomplete, situated in and through context, constantly being constructed and deconstructed. This post-structural view of knowledge can allow one to engage in a more nuanced interpretation of lived experience through the study of phenomenology. Intentionality has been an important concept in Husserlian and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and remains an important concept for Vagle to preserve in post-

intentional phenomenology, though Vagle conceptualizes intentionality post-structurally. For Vagle, intentionality is permeating everything all the time and, in a manner, so complex that it is not possible to trace its origins. Using Deleuze and Guatarri's concepts of line of flight and multiplicities in posting-intentionality allows one to focus on how things connect rather than what things are—this situates intentionality as unstable, partial and always moving. Intentional connections are present, but they become lines of flight, that when explored, are eluding, fleeing, entangled, and taking on various intensities in and over time, through multiple contexts (Vagle, 2015).

Vagle's post-intentionality also moves to more critical notions of the body, in that bodies are cultured, gendered, and socially classed. Posting-intentionality is an argument that multiple intentionalities cannot be traced to their origins, that we do not begin as stable subjects, rather we enter in the middle—as a changing subject whose intending is shaped by our social world (2015).

Post-structural ways of knowing and understanding as "fleeting, momentary, tentative and dangerous" allow phenomenology to be a "philosophy of lived experience" and a philosophy "capable of being used toward political ends" (2014, p. 114). A post-structural approach recognizes the fluidity of knowledge and seeks a methodology that can respond to the complex intentional relations manifesting within a social apparatus. To take up post-intentional phenomenology requires one to remain open, flexible and contemplative while thinking and acting. Vagle's post-intentional approach to phenomenology paves way for a methodological examination of the social apparatus in which phenomena manifest.

The methodological process for post-intentional phenomenology draws on aspects of van Manen and Dahlberg's approaches, Heidegger's notion of manifestations, on his own interpretations of the philosophical notion of intentionality; and post-structural commitments to knowledge always, already being tentative and never complete (Vagle, 2014). There are five components for conducting post-intentional phenomenological research that I discuss in this chapter.

Living Phenomenologically

For me, post-intentional phenomenology is a way of living through time, space, and interactions with others and the world around me. In this way of moving through the world, determining what it might mean to be and know, I find myself slowing down, seeking and observing the multiplicities of contexts producing and provoking each small, large, insignificant and significant lived experience and the meaning I draw while reflecting on these instances.

Post-intentional phenomenology offers a set of commitments I aimed to embody throughout the study. The study offered an opportunity for me to practice a philosophy of lived experience in which I explored a post-intentional phenomenon that is produced and provoked by social contexts. In slowing down, opening up, and exploring how a critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults, I proposed youth participatory action research as a (m)ethod that can be employed toward political ends. I sought to engage young people in an exploration of their world and their agency in the world. In grappling with young people's understandings, I simultaneously grappled with the multiplicities of my identities as well as my understandings of young people and the world we share. In undergoing a shared exploratory process, we further nuanced our

knowledge around the research questions and findings, as well as furthered knowledge of ourselves, our positionality, and our agency. In examining the latter part of this work, I sought to maintain post-structural commitments, understanding myself as shaped by and through intentional relations with this work.

My Study

I explained post-intentional phenomenology and why I have chosen this methodology, now I shift to describe Vagle's five components for designing and crafting a post-intentional phenomenological study. I then share how I used the five steps to explore how critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults through a process of YPAR. As mentioned previously, the five components for conducting post-intentional phenomenological research are as follows (Vagle, 2018):

1. Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue.
2. Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering phenomenological material appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation.
3. Make a post-reflexion plan.
4. Explore the post-intentional phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material and post-reflexions.
5. Craft a text that engages the productions and provocations of the post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue.

I followed these components, applying an iterative rather than linear process, as I worked my way through the summer project. I layered stages of analysis, results, and implications of the phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape for young people

and adults. Next, I describe each of the five components in greater detail and within the context of this study.

Component 1: Identify a Post-Intentional Phenomenon in Context(s), around a Social Issue

The first component comprises six subcomponents that support the foundation of this post-intentional phenomenological study. Vagle's (2018) subcomponents include:

1. State the research problem;
2. Complete a partial review of the literature;
3. Identify and discuss theorists you want to think with (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) relative to the research problem;
4. Articulate the phenomenon and accompanying research questions;
5. Situate the phenomenon in the multiple, partial, and varied contexts in which it tends to manifest;
6. Select the research participants (2018, p. 140).

In Chapter One, I presented the research problem (1.1). I closed Chapter One with an articulation of the phenomenon I aimed to explore (critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults) and stated both my primary (Post-Intentional Phenomenology) research question as well as my secondary research questions (Youth Participatory Action Research) (1.4). In Chapter Two, I crafted a partial review of the literature (1.2) and identified initial theorists I intended to think with (1.3). Below I situate the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts (1.5) and describe the selection of my study's participants (1.6).

1.5 Situate the phenomenon in the multiple, partial, and varied contexts in which it tends to manifest

Throughout this study I sought to explore critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults through a youth participatory action research project. In this subcomponent, I describe the Community Based Organization (Pseudonym: Roots) as the primary research site. Through a vignette, readers get a glimpse of a typical day at the Roots. I then briefly describe *The Healing Project*. *The Healing Project* is the title for the six-week high school summer YPAR project experience.

The Community Based Organization

Roots provides a supportive community that encourages young people to embrace an academically challenging lifestyle through nurturing relationships, strategic partnerships, and creative entrepreneurship. The after school and summer program provides a comprehensive academic environment that supports young people (middle and high school students) for success in culturally competent colleges, expansive relevant careers, and high impact global leadership.

I worked with Roots as a middle grades licensed teacher and Director of Curriculum. I joined the team prior to the start of summer programming in May 2016. The organization of staff roles are unique in that there is an intentional flattening of hierarchy in the way the team operates. Our staff includes: an Executive Director, Program Director, Director of Mentorship & Behavior Specialist, Director of Assessments, Director of Junior Servant Leaders and Food, Director of Volunteer Programming, Youth Leadership and Development Mentors, a Recruitment Specialist, a Front Desk Specialist, Trauma Specialist, Director of Brotherhood Program, and an Office Manager. Our team is diverse across race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class. We were a team of eight Black women, two white women, three Black men, and one white

man, our ages range from 24-55+ years, we identify mostly from working and middle class.

Each workday we convened at a round table over lunch, an hour and a half prior to the arrival of young people. Roots hosts the *Neighborhood Women's Space*, members of the church, as well as the young people enrolled in afterschool programming, and the staff and volunteers who work with these young people. This is a space in which community members are coming and going, regularly stopping in to have a meal. Many of our community members, young people and adults included, are food insecure so food was an integral part of what we provided and how we convened. At our daily workday meetings, we often ate lunch together and always began by informally checking-in, sharing how we are and what is going on in our personal lives.

What followed varied daily, but generally involved updates on important programmatic information, such as meetings with community partners, upcoming event planning etc. Programmatic decisions were always brought to the team, discussed as a team, and decided as a team. I provided a daily schedule for program, which we discussed, modified, and altered as needed. We spent significant time discussing the young people we work with—information we learned through our interactions with the young people, their family, and their teachers. This information greatly informed our relationships and responses to the young people we worked with. Additionally, we were able to problem-solve with one another, drawing on each other's strengths to address multiple needs. Our team is repeatedly told and shown that each of us is important, of value, and needed—operating under an understanding that our impact is as strong as the cohesiveness of our collective effort. Our team regularly laughed, cried, and prayed

together—we knew each other intimately and we believed that our relationships with one another were an integral part of the work we were able to do together.

A Vignette[1]

It was a typical Wednesday, the children rushed through the doors, greeted by Ms. Toniya, grabbing snack and shuffling down the stairs. We convened on pull out chairs in a circle of the cafeteria. Breaking from a tradition of resistance, Marcus volunteered to read the question of the day—what tv show would you like to live in for a week? Diamond and the boy next to her did three rounds of rock, paper, scissors to compete to read the word of the day, "differentiate." Robert begged to read the quote of the day, "Healing begins where the wound was made" by Alice Walker. Upon reading the quote, Robert asked me questions about what it really meant—you know, the deeper meaning. Mr. Travis began with a reminder about the importance of time, moving from homework and games to dinner on time, a skill that would be necessary in their future. After reading the word of the day, several kids offered up their interpretations of the definition, putting the word into a sentence. One scholar shared, "I can differentiate between my cat and my brother's cat because we found his cat on the street," which received a chuckle from the majority of the group. Robert read the quote of the day. Hands shot up, kids anxious to share their insights. Robert offered his first, "I think this means… that when someone really hurts you, like not a cut or something like that, but with words, that you got to go to where it hurts and try to fix that." Crystal expanded, "I think it means like when people say mean things to you that those things last if you don't try and heal them. I also think it means don't sweat the small stuff," more scholars added. Mr. Travis joked about the upcoming Super Bowl—how the Patriots are going to need to do some serious healing after they lose to the Falcons—the group laughed. We swung from serious to humorous, heavy to light. I shared that sometimes I bury small things and eventually over time I'm like a volcano waiting to erupt, that most of the time, for me, burying a bunch of small things, often leads to an eruption—a breakdown. For me, the quote is a reminder that burying is not healing. Marcus shared the question of the day, "what tv show would you like to live in for week?" and excitedly asked to go first. Was it Sponge Bob that Marcus wanted to live in for a week? The kids were excited to respond to the question and there were a range of responses—Empire, Bad Girls Club, Pretty Little Liars, many cartoons I hadn't heard of (note to self—we learn so much about our kids in these moments). We wrapped up the question of the day with another warm demand from Mr. Travis, his specialty. Mr. Travis came down hard on the group about being quiet during the short designated quiet time at the end of free time and before homework. He talked about the need to center yourself during the day, the power of tuning out everything around you and checking in with yourself. I shared with the kids the research study our Executive Director sent over the weekend. I told the kids about the adults who had extreme adversity in their lives growing up, "the making it success stories" the media loves to tell, and how oftentimes these "successful" adults suffer from hypertension, diabetes, heart attack, cancer etc. due to the sustained level of stress they have endured their entire lives. I described that it might feel weird or unimportant now, but that

[1] This vignette is also published in Vagle and Hamel (2019)

slowing down and focusing on our minds, our bodies and our breath for 10-15 minutes every day might just be lifesaving. We were technically done with circle (and slightly overtime) but the kids were engaged, choosing to keep it going.

And then something beautiful happened.

Josiah asked if he could share something with the group. He wanted to expand on the importance of breathing and centering ourselves. He told us about his mom. He described his mom's childhood as tough, that family members were messed up and they had touched her inappropriately which led to her moving in and out of foster families. He talked about how now she's a single mom, she's got kids, and bills to pay, work, and no car. She's been diagnosed with cancer. Josiah's grandpa had cancer and beat it but his mom's cancer is back. Recently she was told she doesn't have much time to live.

Not many words were said, but everyone listened. I nodded silently communicating, "I hear you, we hear you, we are here for you." Anthony quietly said "I'm praying for you man," it was so quiet that neither Josiah nor most of the circle had heard, but Mr. Aron did. Mr. Aron chimed in, "hey Josiah, I want you to know that when you finished sharing that Anthony said he was praying for you and I want you to know that there are kids here praying for you and that I am too." Josiah nodded. Anthony spoke, "Yeah. I just want you to know that I know what you're going through. My mom died of cancer when I was really young and my dad is dying of cancer right now." Kya raised her hand, "Did you all see Ms. Michelle (teacher at many of the scholar's school) crying? She was crying and had to leave school because she found out her mom died of cancer today." I offered to set up a table with paper and markers for card decorating during free time. It was quiet. Mr. David asked the kids to bring their own chair and an empty chair to the tables as they left the circle for free time. The kids stood up and dispersed to a variety activities. The circle had ended.

Next, I briefly describe *The Healing Project*. *The Healing Project* is the title for the six-week high school summer YPAR project experience.

The Healing Project (YPAR)

Leading up to the summer, I collaborated with Root's Executive Director and a University partner to create both a vision and accompanying curriculum for the high school summer program. Throughout the process of visioning, we engaged in critical reflections on key issues the young people and families we work with continue to face. A little historical context is helpful for understanding how we landed with *The Healing Project* name and the broad project topic: health disparities. The Executive Director is

also a local pastor out of the same space Roots operates in. In her pastoral work, she spends a lot of time listening to community members—in the context of the church, the community-based organization, and in the local neighborhood. After bearing witness to numerous women's stories of experiencing sex-trafficking, the Executive Director founded the Women's Space. One of the things she learned from women who shared their stories and through her own research on human trafficking is that many women were trafficked during early adolescence, at the average age of 12. The Executive Director founded Roots as a direct response to the women's stories and a need in the community to provide a safe space for young people to be during the hours after school. Upon much deliberation, the Executive Director, myself, and the University partner determined a consistent and pressing community issue has been health, well-being, and healing. In addition to these pressing issues, Roots is located in a historically marginalized neighborhood of a large Midwestern City. Members of the Roots community are predominantly Black and working-class. We know that significant health disparities for this population exist due to the on-going structural and systemic racism, classism, sexism (and the many other -isms) permeating our institutions, policies, practices, and social contexts. In addition to identifying health, well-being, and healing as a key issue to address through our summer high school programming, there was a financial need for the program to be able to run. We were able to apply for a grant that would support research on health disparities. We received this grant and were able to pay our young people a small sum for their role as researchers.

The Healing Project specifically aimed to explore Black adolescent understandings of health disparities and how communities can support their healing and

wellness. The legacy of slavery continues to shape the everyday experiences of young men and women from Black communities, including their health. Black adolescents experience persistent and pernicious health disparities, such as violence and sexual assault. Some efforts address health equity, but few explore Black adolescent understandings of these and how communities can support their healing and wellness. Young people received training and supervised practice on a variety of community based participatory research strategies and methodologies including research ethics. Based on our past work with young people at Roots, attention was expected to be paid to health disparities related to sexual health.

In the next section, I describe the participants of this study. All of the participants, including myself, were a part of a summer research project that took place in the summer of 2017. Most of the youth participants were young people I knew and had established relationships with. I included myself as a participant in this study because I facilitated the youth participatory action research project and wanted to explore how my own critical consciousness was being provoked and produced throughout the research project and subsequent analysis.

1.6 Select the Research Participants

In this section, I describe the sixteen participants in this study. I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of youth participants. In my initial post-reflexion entry, I wrote extensively about myself, as a participant in this study (refer to Component #2, Post Reflexion Journal). I included aspects of my k-12 experience, my college experience, and my first few years teaching with the hope that these stories will allow the reader to imagine me on my journey. I hope that my lived experiences participating in the project

as a facilitator and co-researcher with young people will allow readers to imagine the possibilities for developing, expanding, and nurturing one's own and other's critical consciousness. Below, I briefly describe myself as a participant using the prompt the youth participants also used to describe themselves.

Tracy. White, heterosexual, female, age 30, lives in large Midwestern city.

The fifteen young people who participated in this study as co-researchers in the youth participatory action research project were asked to self-identify prior to conducting focus group interviews with one another. These are the self-identifications the young participants elected to describe for themselves; I used their exact language in writing these descriptions. Some of the participants chose to include multiple aspects of their identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, and student status. Participants were encouraged to share what they felt comfortable sharing about their identities, as reflected in their descriptions.

Table 2: Youth Participants

Pseudonym	Self-Identified Descriptors
Elijah	Elijah self identifies as a male, Black/African American, high school student.
Destiny	Destiny self identifies as a female, Black, 14-year-old, high school student.
Jaden	Jaden self identifies as a 15-year-old.
Jada	Jada identifies as a female, bi-racial (Caucasian and African American).
Leo	Leo identifies as a 13-year-old, high school student.
Xavier	Xavier identifies as a male, Black, 14-year-old, athlete, high school student.
Tyler	Tyler identifies as a male, African American, 14-year-old.
Laila	Laila identifies as a female, Virgo, African American, 13-year-old.
Sydney	Sydney identifies as a heterosexual female, bi-racial (Asian and Black), 14-year-old, high school student.
Tiana	Tiana identifies as a heterosexual female, 16-year-old, high school student.
Madison	Madison identifies as a heterosexual female, Black/African American, 14-year-old, high school student.
Kayla	Kayla identifies as a heterosexual female, Caucasian, 16-year-old, high school student.
Malik	Malik identifies as a male, African American, Christian, 15-year-old, high school student.
Michael	Michael identifies as a male, 13-year-old, high school student.
Cameron	Cameron identifies as male, African American, 14-year-old, high school student.

Component #2: Devise a Clear Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Phenomenological Material Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation

In this section, I describe the phenomenological material I collected to open up and explore how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults

through youth participatory action research. I then describe how the sources of phenomenological material align with my primary and secondary research questions.

Phenomenological Material. I collected sources of phenomenological material to open up and explore the phenomenon of how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research. The YPAR project took place over a six-week (four days/week), summer program. I primarily collected sources of phenomenological material from group discussions, semi-structured focus group interviews, and posters created throughout the project. I also collected sources of phenomenological material from my post-reflexion journal entries, which I started prior to the YPAR project taking place, during the six weeks of the project, and in the time that has passed between then and crafting this phenomenological text. Below, I have identified the sources of phenomenological material and the primary and secondary research questions the material aligns with.

Table 3
Alignment of Research Questions with Sources of Post Intentional Materials

Research Questions	**Sources of Phenomenological Material**
Primary #1 (post-intentional phenomenology): How might critical consciousness take shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research?	Post-reflexion journal, focus group interviews, posters, group discussions
Secondary #2 (YPAR): How do young people define health and well-being?	Semi-structured focus group interviews
Secondary #3 (YPAR): What are young people doing on an everyday basis that contributes to their health and well-being?	Semi-structured focus group interviews
Secondary #4 (YPAR): What barriers to health and well-being to young people face?	Semi-structured focus group interviews
Secondary #5 (YPAR): What healing strategies do young people use?	Semi-structured focus group interviews

Post-reflexion journal. At the beginning of the study, I wrote an initial post-reflection entry (Vagle, 2014/2018). In the entry below, I described my role as a facilitator and co-researcher on the project, aspects of my identity and story, my beliefs, and my assumptions. I referred back to my initial statement throughout the summer project and I continued to write entries in my journal. I also utilized voice memos to audio record my reflections. For example, after each daily session, I recorded myself talking through my reflections, thoughts, and connections or disconnections to the daily session and to my initial statement. I revisited these post-reflexion recordings over the six weeks and throughout the analysis stages.

Table 4

Initial Post-Reflexion Entry (2017)	**(2019)**
I am a 30-year-old, white, heterosexual, English-speaking, able-bodied, female. I was born and raised in the Midwest, primarily in a middle-upper middle-class suburb of a medium sized metropolitan city. I attended college in a large midwestern metropolitan city. I taught four years on the East Coast in a large metropolitan city prior to returning to the same Midwestern university to attend graduate school. *I attended the elementary school just a few blocks from my family's home. My parents built the house I grew up in, as did nearly all the families that moved onto the empty plots that would eventually comprise a thriving middle-class community. I walked to school with many neighborhood children, with all the new construction, we had to be careful to check for tractors before passing through the land that was still being developed. My best friend lived on the corner of my street with her dad, step-mom, and two older brothers. We played together every other weekend and on Wednesday afternoon and evenings, because those were the days she spent at her dad's. On the other days, I played outside with a group of neighbor boys, who were all a year younger or older than me. As a child, I loved to be outside and play hard. The biggest family battles*	*There are things you can physically identify that are part of me in big and small ways. I'm white, female, middle-class, able-bodied, English-speaking. There are things you can't physically see but that are also part of me in big and small ways. I'm heterosexual and recently-married. Then there are the things that I have experienced--things that have shaped me into the person writing here, now. While no single experience defines me, there is a distinct difference between the person who*

came when my mom called from the open garage door for me to come home from the neighbor's each night at dusk and take a shower. *I was much more comfortable in my brother's hand-me-downs than my older sister's hand me downs, as the youngest child it was rare to receive anything new. I have many fond memories from elementary school, however the memory I recall most, the one I can still feel as if it just happened, is a traumatic one. I was in first grade. My neighborhood friend and fellow first grade classmate was missing from school for several days. The three first grade classroom teachers had a serious talk with us prior to his return. We learned that his father died, that he was really missing him, and that we would need to do our best to lift his spirits and be sensitive to his needs. I don't remember if it was my family, the teachers, or the kids at school who revealed how he had died, that he had tied himself to the train tracks near our house to commit suicide. What I do remember is Mark coming to school, he wasn't talking, and his eyes looked like they had been crying. The first bell rang in the morning for outdoor recess. All the first graders flooded the halls and the four doors that led outside to the playground and open field. I was right next to Mark as we hurried out the doors. A first-grade classmate was holding the door and as Mark was on his way out, he sympathetically said, "I'm really sorry to hear about your dad, Mark." Mark erupted in sobs and booked it out the doors. I never saw someone run so fast, and he did not stop running. He ran all the way home (of course we didn't know that at the time). The remainder of the day we worried about where he was and if he was safe and how we had failed in lifting his spirits.* *My middle school funneled in 6th graders from three elementary schools across town, my own and two others. At the time I was on the select traveling soccer team, so I had teammates who were close friends from each of the elementary schools. I remember 6th grade as an exciting coming of age year. I was comfortable with my social positioning, in large part because being a part of the soccer team made the elementary to middle school transition and fitting in a relatively smooth process for me. I became much more concerned with how I looked and what I wore. Unlike the big resistance and tantrums, I threw about showering as an elementary schooler, in middle school, showering was part of my daily morning routine. I began babysitting for money so that I could buy my own clothes, my mom never*	*wrote the initial post-reflexion statement in 2017 and who I understand myself to be now. You cannot see this thing that I feel shapes me with an intensity that forever changed the person I was into the person I am. Though I see it and I feel it, every moment of everyday. This is my grief. It is the unexpected, heart-wrenching, murky loss of my big brother. (The tightness in my chest, the shortness of my breath, the welling of my eyes is signaling me, it is time to pause this writing now).*

quite understood how much this mattered for how I was perceived by my classmates. When I was 13, I was at school the day before school started up, my fellow student senate executive committee classmates and I were helping teachers set up. A close friend of mine (then and now), received a phone call from the office. The phone call was bad news, our older siblings' (her sister and my brother) lost a classmate. Jason was one of my brother's best friends. He had been gone all summer and was due to return back for their senior year of high school, but instead of returning he took his life. I phoned my parents as soon as I heard the news. They informed me my brother had just found out and thanked me for calling. I have a distinctly vivid memory of my brother sitting silently with bloodshot eyes on the green rocking chair in our family room, back and forth, back and forth. *I had a rocky start to high school. In addition to the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th that year, the first two months of freshman year, I tore my ACL in the semi-final round of the fall soccer tournament, I had mono--which delayed knee surgery, and my boyfriend broke up with me the night before the Homecoming dance. While off to an intense start, most of my time in high school was spent working hard to get mostly As and Bs, participating in student organizations, volunteering, and working as a lifeguard and CNA for spending money. I was very social, I dated, I went to underage drinking parties when parents were out of town. In addition to what may be perceived as an ordinary high school experience I also experienced numerous encounters with death in high school. My freshman year, a senior in high school (another close friend of my brother's) died in a car accident and one of my fellow classmate's endured a traumatic brain injury at a graduation party and also passed. My sophomore year one of my classmate's older brother (a senior) died of meningitis, a junior overdosed and died over spring break. My junior year, my friends went hiking and returned to find the older brother (a senior) of one of my classmate's had committed suicide--they were the first responders. Later that year, the Valedictorian of the senior class died in a car accident on her way home from a winter fundraising event she organized. The summer going into my senior year of high school, a friend that I was close to in middle school but had since grown apart from, wandered off at a party my friends had gone to with her. She committed suicide that night. When I think back on high school, there's a real*	

heaviness in my chest from all the loss. To this day, churches can be a real trigger for me, most of the time I spend a lot of energy blocking the painful memories of loss and trying to hold back tears. *In college, I moved a long car drive away from my family to attend school in a neighboring state. I was excited to live independently from my parents and in an urban setting for the first time in my life. Some of my best friends from high school attended the same college as me. In addition, my boyfriend at the time was from my hometown and had already completed his freshman year at the same institution. So, while the physical location for this next chapter was new, I carried many comforts through my relationships with me. I had to work much harder in college to get As and Bs, and I was surprised by this. I had always heard my high school had a great reputation, so my assumption was that I was adequately prepared to do well in college. For the most part I was, but I learned quickly that studying for 2 hours for an exam like I might have in high school was not going to cut it at the University. I adapted. When I was accepted into the Elementary Education program after completing 60 credits toward my general education, I quickly got into a groove and thrived in my courses. I had student teaching experiences across all types of educational settings: urban, charter, magnet, immersion, and open-schools. After completing my four years of undergrad and fifth year of graduate courses, in addition to a year-long student teaching experience, I felt competent, ready, and thrilled to begin the search for my first teaching position.* *At the time, there were hiring freezes sweeping the country. I nannied throughout college to pay for my living expenses. One evening I mentioned to the mother of the children I nannied for that I was thinking about moving in order to find a teaching job. She asked me where I would want to go. I shared that I dreamed of moving to New York City but that I certainly had no means to make that a reality. She called me later that night. She told me she had a wealthy brother living in Manhattan that was searching for a nanny, she cautioned me about the vastly different lifestyle his family lived (I scoffed, she and her husband were both doctors--how different could it really be?). The next night I spoke with her brother, I shared that I would love to nanny for him over the summer while I simultaneously pursued my search for a teaching career. My educational background made me a desirable nanny candidate--he flew me out to*	

New York three days later for a trial weekend. When I arrived in Manhattan, I found out we would be leaving the city shortly to go to their second home in the Hamptons. I landed the job on Sunday. *That summer I nannied four days a week for two, two and half and four-year-old girls. I was a live-in nanny, so my rent was covered, I had my own bedroom and bathroom at both homes, and a fancy elite gym membership that was included in their city residence. On my off days, I hit the pavement. I was bright eyed and naive. The hiring freeze was impacting New York City as well, so my options seemed to be assistant positions in private schools, subbing in public schools, and charter schools. After an online vetting process, a phone interview, and a demo-lesson in front of a principal, I received my first offer. I believed I had landed my dream teaching job. I would be a 3rd grade associate teacher at the founding school of a highly successful charter school in Harlem. I had no idea why the NAACP would protest our network multiple times the first year that I taught, why the teacher's union despised us, why we would be compared to Nazi's on the shared lunchroom walls by the co-located parent teacher association, or that protesting for free co-located building space would be a requirement of my new profession. I believed in the mission to provide an equitable, exceptional education for students who have been historically marginalized within school settings. I did not know that in becoming a part of this movement, by teaching in these classrooms, that I would lose sight of what I believed to best for the healthy development of young people, nor that I would no longer recognize the teacher I had become.* *When I entered my doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction in 2014, I sought to understand how macro social, economic and political systems produce and maintain educational inequities that continue to severely, often devastatingly, impact the lives of young people moving through our educational system. As an educator, I wanted to understand how and why I arrived at a place where I no longer recognized myself as the educator I aspired to be. I sought to prepare future teachers, who like me are passionate about teaching for social justice; with skills and knowledge they would need to navigate educational contexts so that they would not wind up inadvertently perpetuating harm onto the very students they sought to empower. For me, teaching for social justice means actively resisting and working against the status quo that continues to perpetuate*	

unjust and inequitable educational and economic trajectories for young people around multiple markers of identity: race, class, gender, etc. I have taken my yearning to understand and make sense of the greater social, political, and economic forces that shaped my lived experiences as a classroom teacher as the work of fostering a critical consciousness.	

Post-Reflexion Audio Memo Excerpt

> *Tracy: Ok, Day 1! June 26, summer 2017. It was an awesome first day, about 17 youth showed up today, they did a great job and seem excited about the program, a little skeptical about the research. I think research sounds like school, based on the looks I was getting, I'll need to do a thorough job breaking down how this experience will be similar or different to projects they've worked on before. I think tomorrow when the YPAR group from _____ (deleted for anonymity) comes to share their experiences I think it will really help the kids understand what's happening, what the goal is, how creative they can be with what they do and where they take it so I'm anxious for that.* (Tracy Post-Reflexion Audio Memo 6/26/17, 0:01-1:18).

Semi-structured focus group interviews. Early in the process, participants from the groups advocated to meet as a single collective, and when necessary break out into three sub-groups for conversation and data collection. Members elected to belong to the group that they felt most comfortable talking about their individual experiences and thoughts on health, well-being, barriers, and healing strategies. The three groups included:

Co-Ed Focus Group: Young people participating in this focus group were 13-15 years old. 4 participants identified as male; 3 participants identified as female. 5 participants identified as African American or Black, 1 participant identified as bi-racial (Caucasian and African American), and one did not share a racial/ethnicity identifier. Most participants chose to share where they are or will be attending high school (5 of 7). Two participants shared they live in a large Midwestern city.

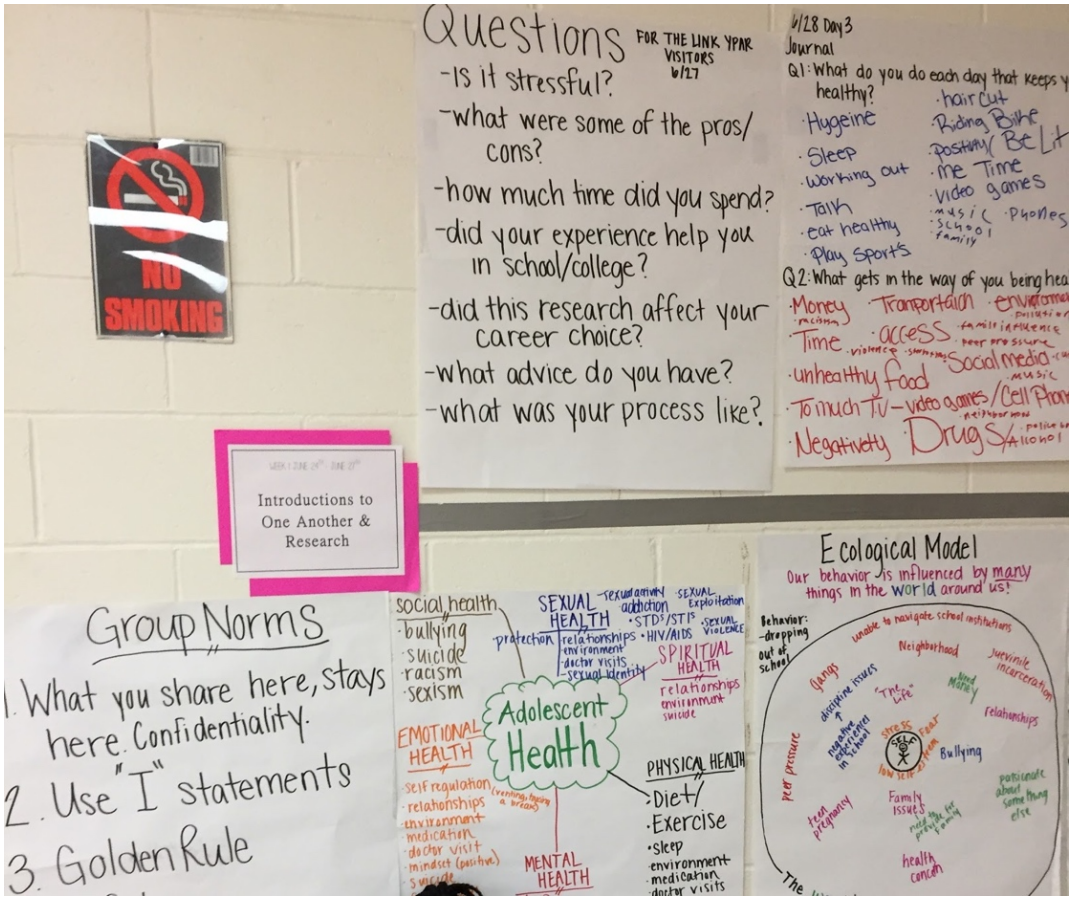
Girl's' Focus Group: Young people participating in this focus group interview were 14-16 years old. All four participants identified as heterosexual females. One participant identified as Black African American, 2 participants identified as bi-racial, and one participant identified as Caucasian. Most of the young women chose to share where they are or will be attending high school (3 of 4).

Boy's Focus Group: Young people participating in this focus group interview were 13-15 years old. There were three participants in this focus group interview. Two participants identified as African American and one did not state a racial/ethnicity identity for themselves.

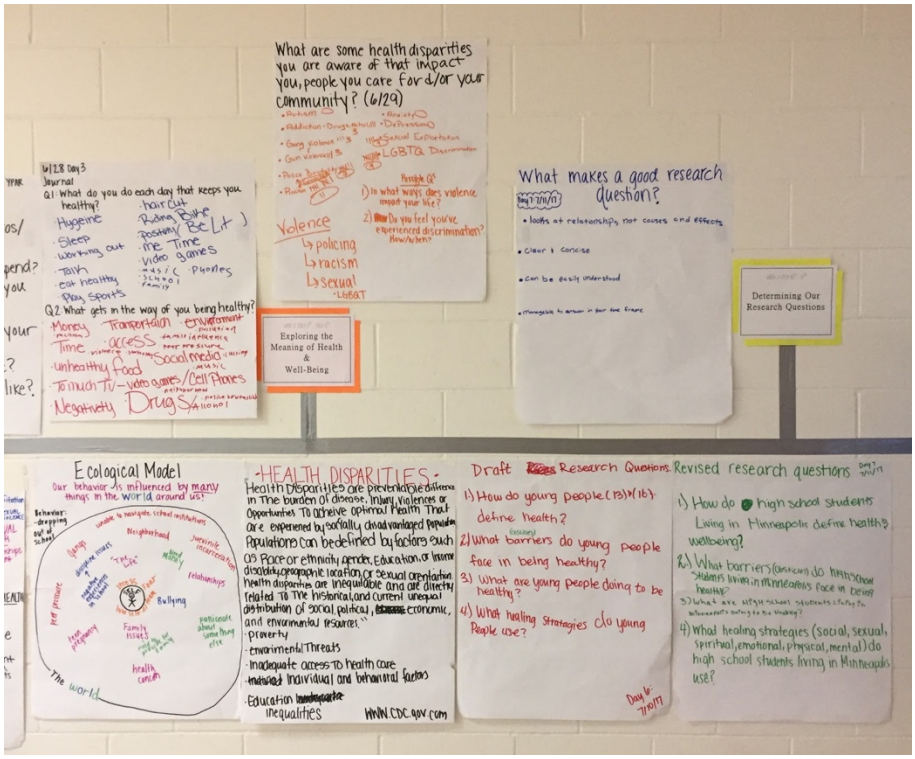
Throughout the summer, the YPAR group used "tools to deconstruct miseducation and misrepresentations of the African experience, reconstructing knowledge of African history and philosophies, and constructing a better life for the community…" (Potts, 2003, pg. 178). They began by learning about and discussing health disparities and received training on research design, methods, and data analysis. Then, they talked about and reflected on their own experiences related to health and well-being, barriers to health and well-being and healing strategies. These conversations centered on co-crafting both individual and community stories around health equity, and to better understand how historical, social, and political forces influenced and shaped the public narrative of their personal, historical, and community stories. With the knowledge they developed, they began to take some small actions to further understand health and health disparities. Toward the end of the summer, they met with a high-ranking public official whose job is to address health disparities. They interviewed her about what the city has done and aims to do around supporting adolescent health.

Posters. During most sessions the YPAR group convened, the young people took turns capturing the conversation on large chart paper for the group to visualize and record in their individual journals. These posters were used to create a timeline of their summer project during their culminating community presentation and were referenced as data sources for both the primary and secondary research questions.

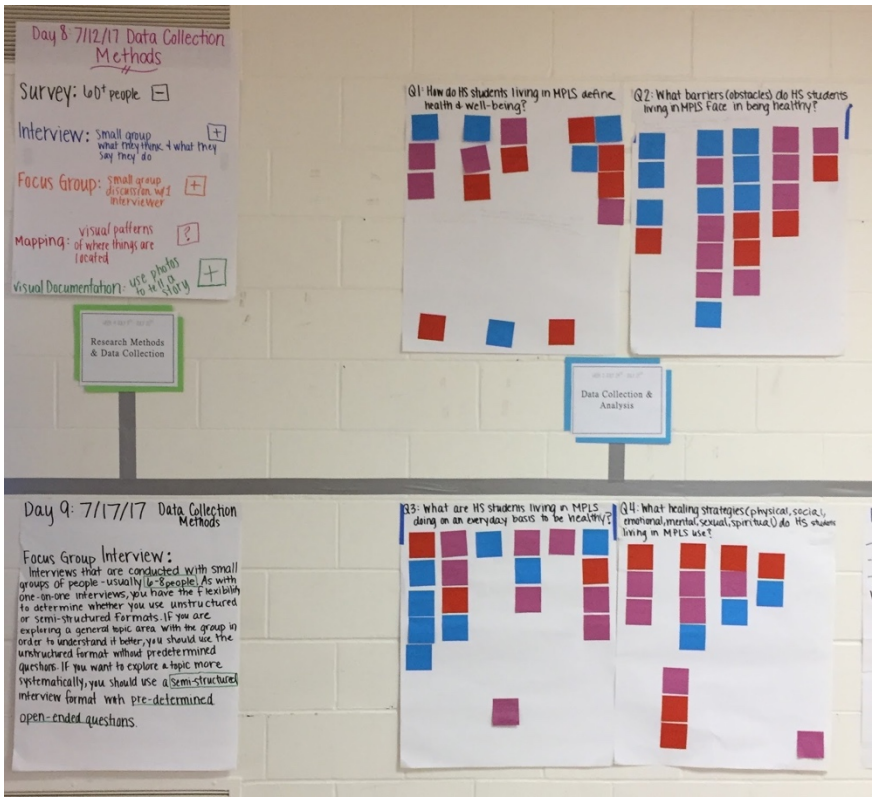
YPAR 17 Figure 1



YPAR 17 Figure 2



YPAR 17 Figure 3



Group Discussions. Beginning June 26th, 2017, YPAR participants convened for project work on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays for an hour and a half, 4.5 hours a week. The structure of our time together typically involved a regular check-in (daily), setting an agenda and task list for the week (Mondays), diving into the research (Tuesdays), tracking and reflecting on our experiences and findings (Wednesdays). The first session I introduced Youth Participatory Action Research and invited the young people to participate in the summer project as co-researchers. Throughout the first week, we created a proposed timeline for the remaining five weeks. The first week was an introduction to research and YPAR. We hosted a YPAR panel made up of youth researchers from another community-based organization, their project focused on sexual exploitation and the participants had all been part of what they named "the life." Our second week we used a social-ecological model to explore social issues impacting our lives. We had group discussions focused on how young people conceptualize health and well-being and barriers young people face. We looked at definitions of health disparities and thought about health disparities that impact ourselves, our families, and communities. The third week we explored what makes a good research question and methods for collecting data. The young people drafted and revised research questions and determined they would utilize focus group interviews as their data collection method. The fourth week the young people facilitated focus group interviews. When the group elected to form three small groups, for which they would all be the participants, they elected three youth leaders to both participate and facilitate (in different groups).

During the fifth week, the young people analyzed their data through a process of thematic coding. Working in small groups they identified key patterns and themes for

each group across the four research questions. Following the creation of initial themes, the young people worked in different small groups to examine each of the research questions and corresponding themes. They began to categorize the various themes under each research question. Finally, the young people worked in small groups to determine initial findings. After sharing the findings for each question, the group came to consensus on writing key findings. The final and sixth week, the young people synthesized what they had learned from their experience, determined a suitable audience, created a slideshow presentation, and presented their findings to friends, family members, and community members.

Group discussions were recorded and referenced during the analysis stages of the post-intentional research study.

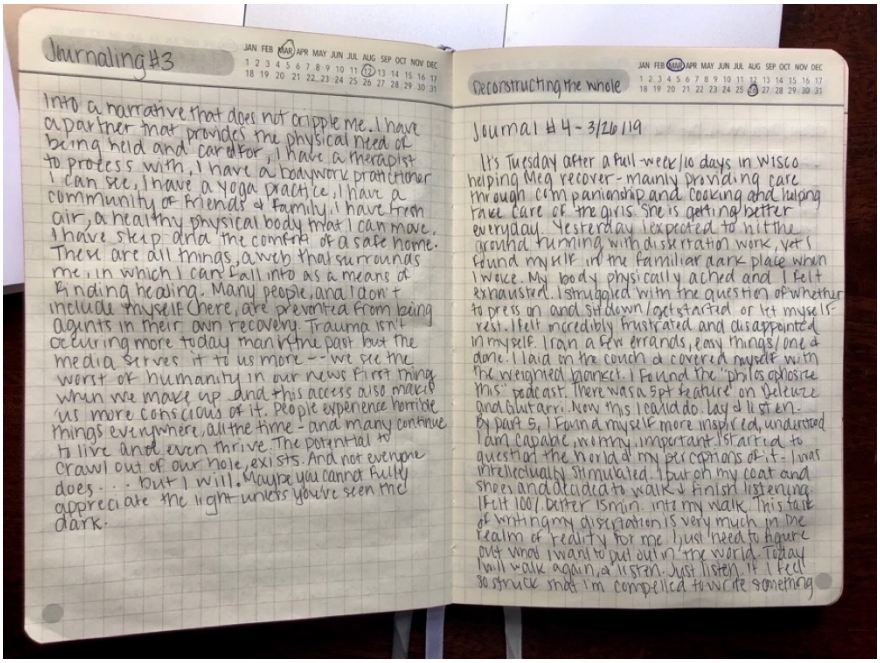
Component #3: Make a Post-Reflexion Plan.

Post-reflexivity in post-intentional phenomenological research asks that the phenomenologist aims to "see what frames their seeing—to try and locate and name their assumptions of what is normal and what surprises them" (Vagle, 2018, p. 153). Vagle suggests four strategies for trying to see what frames our seeing.

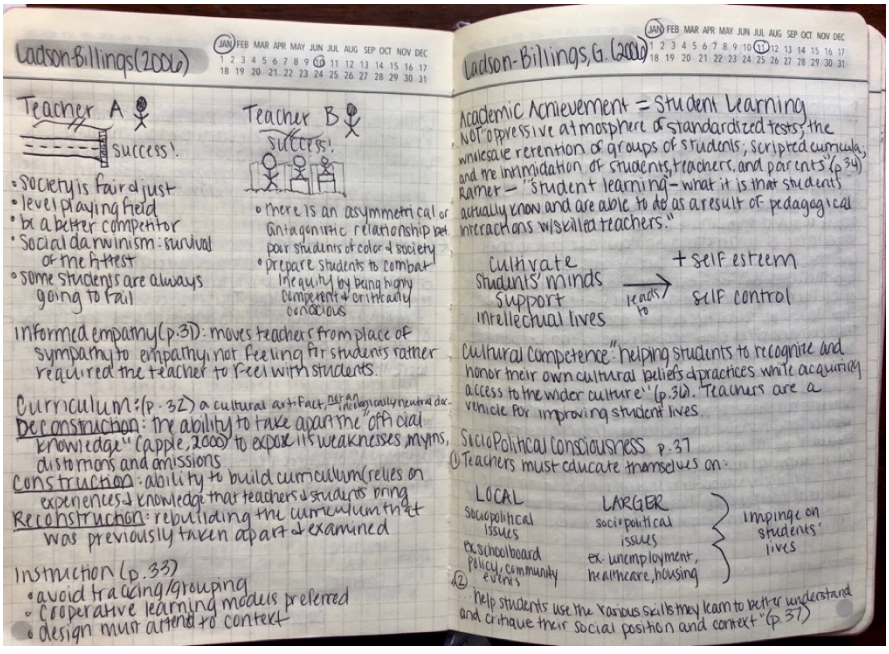
1. Moments when they/we instinctively connect with what they/we observe and moments in which they/we instinctively disconnect;
2. Out assumptions of normality;
3. Our bottom lines, that is those beliefs, perceptions, perspectives, opinions that we refuse to shed; and
4. Moments in which they/we are shocked by what they/we observe (p. 154)

I engaged in post-reflexing before, during, and after gathering phenomenological material in this study. I kept track of my post-reflexing in a journal.

Post-Reflexion Journal; Figure 4



Post-Reflexion Journal; Figure 5



For me, post-intentional phenomenology is a way of living through time, space, and interactions with others and the world around me. In this way of moving through the world, determining what it means to be and know, journaling provided an opportunity for me to slow down, as well as a space to articulate observations of the multiplicities of contexts shaping and producing each small, large, insignificant and significant lived experience and the meaning I was drawing while reflecting on these instances. The journal provides a space for me to name and wonder about how the multiplicities of my identity and positionality are always intersecting, producing and shaped through moments in time, interactions with people and the world around me. Earlier in this chapter, I included my initial post-reflexion statement alongside a 2019 post-reflexion entry. Because the process of post-reflexing is ongoing, I have included another example of my post-reflexing below.

Post-Reflexion Statement #2

> *Our raced, classed, gendered bodies are always already positioned in and by the spaces we find ourselves in. The multiplicity of our identities and the structural privileging and marginalization of these complex and fluid identities both produce and shape our lived experiences and our intentionalities. As a white, middle-class, female, I am often privileged by existing societal structures and contexts. I move through spaces in which my regular body "fits." As a former k-12 student, elementary grades teacher, and current graduate student I continually feel comfortable in varying schooling atmospheres, where my embodied whiteness, middle-classness, and gender are overwhelming represented, and often an unquestioned norm. I travel to school and to work conveniently, in a car that has been passed down to me by my parents, on roads where my white female body and my black Jeep Liberty are likely perceived as safe and law-abiding. I go to doctor's appointments, swiping my debit card for $10 copays, assured my health insurance will likely cover the rest and that my doctors will ask and then listen to what brought me in. I shop for clothes and whether I'm at the mall or a fancy boutique--my body is not surveilled. When the seasons change, my routine changes slightly. As the sun sets earlier and earlier, I hunt for the closest available parking spaces, willing to pay ridiculous meters for a slightly elevated peace of mind and a shortened amount of time spent alone, walking briskly through the dark.*

The girls who participate in the YPAR project this summer, will likely self-identify as adolescent girls of color from working-class families, though each individual participant will have the opportunity to determine the language they use to describe aspects of their identity. Our identities will matter in the work we do together, each of us approaching one another and our work uniquely, shaped by and through our lived experiences in our raced, classed, gendered bodies. Naming and examining how our individual identities intersect to produce our lived experiences, understandings of ourselves and one another, and issues impacting our lives and communities will be explored. My identity as a white, middle-class, female is likely to present barriers between myself and participants who do not identify as white, who may not identify as middle-class. In my multi-faceted role, a researcher, facilitator, and participant in the project, I must continually reflect on my positionality, the group dynamics, group experiences, and our work together.

In YPAR, the role of the researcher is not an isolated individual but rather individuals who form a collective determined to analyze (a) social issue(s) relevant to their lives and to challenge and resist the practices and systems shaping and producing their lived experiences of the social issue(s) under investigation. As young people reflect upon, investigate, and share their lived experiences, there is significant potential for traumatic experiences to surface. Additionally, young people and adults enter YPAR projects with preconceived understandings of themselves, their experiences, their personal and collective histories, as well as preconceived understandings of others. As hooks (1991) and Ngo et al. (2017) point out, "dominant storylines colonize our imaginations and their repetition reinforce and serve the interests of those who are most powerful—white, cis-gendered males" (2017, p. 27). It is possible that young people and adults collaborating together may have prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, the YPAR collective will work to investigate and challenge their own and one another's attitudes so the collective does not unintentionally reinforce dominant narratives. Additionally, adults facilitating YPAR projects must critically reflect on their positionality and the multiplicity of identities they embody while working with young people who share and do not share facets of these identities. These reflections should meaningfully and intentionally inform the adult facilitator's interactions and relationships with the young people they work with. Throughout the YPAR process, adults must critically reflect on their role, their relationships, and their responses to young people with whom they are learning from and with. Ngo et al. suggest "research needs to examine the difficulty of constructing supposedly 'safe' spaces for minoritized young people to share experiences of oppression" (p. 27). Researchers engaging YPAR have the potential to provide important contributions to the scholarship Ngo et. al. describes, by critically reflecting and analyzing the context and moments of the YPAR process in which young people share their stories, as well as engaging young people in discussions reflecting on these moments. While it is my hope that articulating our identities for ourselves and one another, reflecting on our experiences, and working collaboratively throughout the research project will support us, individually and collectively, in developing our critical consciousness,

I anticipate challenges and expect to problem solve throughout the research process. (Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal Entry; 1/3/18).

Component #4: Explore the Post-Intentional Phenomenon Using Theory, Phenomenological Material, and Post-Reflexions.

I wrote, listened to, examined, read, studied, and played with my phenomenological material to capture provocations and productions of how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through the process of youth participatory action research. I explored this phenomenon as it manifested in various intensities, in both partial and fleeting ways. I used thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) to analyze the phenomenological material. Vagle suggests three parts make up component #4.

Part 1: Deconstruct the Wholes of your Phenomenological Material,

Part 2: Think with Your Theory,

Part 3: Analyze your Post-Reflexions (Vagle, 2018, p. 157-159)

Next, I explain how I approached each part of Component 4: exploring the post-intentional phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material, and post-reflexions.

Part 1: Deconstruct the Wholes of your Phenomenological Material. In this stage, I reread all of the primary sources I referenced in chapter two as a means of re-orienting and readying myself to explore the phenomenon under investigation. Upon each reading, I wrote a summary paragraph of key ideas and takeaways that felt important to me as I explore how I and others have conceptualized critical consciousness and as I started to explore how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults as they engaged in a youth participatory action research project.

After I refamiliarized myself with the literature I drew upon, I started listening to the phenomenological material I recorded throughout the research project. I listened to all of my recorded audio sessions and post-reflexion memos between 6/26/17 and 8/8/17. There was a total of twenty-two recorded audio sessions in which I was working with youth participants on our youth participatory action research project. These twenty-two sessions ranged from thirty minutes to an hour and forty minutes, depending on the day's topic. In addition, I listened to thirteen post-reflexion audio memos. These thirteen audio post-reflexion memos ranged from 3:00 to 10:00 minutes. After each recording, I jotted what stood out to me in my post-reflexion journal. Sometimes, my reflections were verbatim quotes, at other times they were wonderings, or connections to literature, emotional responses, and even a couple moments that shocked me.

Upon re-reading and listening to phenomenological material I gathered, I chose to do a close read of two of my colleague's dissertations—Keitha-Gail Martin-Kerr and Kelly Gast's. I selected these two dissertations because they were both post-intentional phenomenological studies conducted in recent years and because I wanted to demystify the story I was telling myself about what a dissertation can be and ought to be. I also wanted to begin thinking about how I might choose to craft my own post-intentional phenomenological text.

While reading Martin-Kerr's Dissertation (Aug. 2016) titled *Women Who Love Women in Jamaica*, I began to familiarize myself with what a finished dissertation might look like and to make connections and disconnections to design, process, and analysis while conducting post-intentional phenomenological research. Below is a sample of the post-reflexing taking place during this close reading of Martin-Kerr's work.

> *Keitha-Gail's dissertation struck me as both rigorous and straight forward. I feel I have plenty of data to draw upon, that my work has value and is worthy in the field, and that I have the skills, lens, knowledge and commitment to write my dissertation. I was surprised to see how she used kind of... two layers of analysis. First, the presentation of tentative manifestations of the phenomenon. Second, plugging in theory to analyze her data. This is making me think about whether this makes sense for my study and making me think about how I want to craft my own work.* (Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal Excerpt, 4/16/19).

Martin-Kerr's writing was instrumental in supporting me toward a headspace where I believed I was ready and able to do this work. I was struck by her ability to write so clearly about a phenomenon that was so complex and personal. I felt as if she wrote in a way that fit with her teaching identity, I was learning from her. I hoped that I would be able to that with my work.

Reading Gast's Dissertation (Jun. 2018) titled *The Caring Police Wear Cardigans: Reading Embodied Emotions Towards Anti-Oppressive Education*, was an emotional and intellectually stimulating journey. As an incredibly embodied person, reading Gast's work I found myself feeling deeply engaged, intrigued, confused, and uncomfortable at times. Below is a small excerpt of my post-reflexing throughout this time.

> *Reading Kelly's dissertation produced so many reactions in me--fear, anxiety, connectedness, bodily-knowing. The content was SO relevant to my teaching experiences and specifically to aspects of my identity. It simultaneously sparked fear/insecurity and motivated me to write in a way that would make my readers feel. The dense nature of her academic writing left me feeling clumsy at times and the stamina it demanded of my contemplative mind made me question my abilities as a writer/my identity as an academic. I bottled negative self-talk and repeatedly talked myself down in my mind. Overall though, reading Kelly's dissertation was a real joy--inspiring and challenging (forcing me/asking me/calling me) to look inward at my assumptions, values, beliefs, and my role in perpetuating and resisting oppressive structures and systems. It made me excited (and fearful) to write my dissertation. Can I evoke an emotional connection, a call to action, curiosity and wonder... with my writing? What struck me most was the power of HER voice, HER ideas, HER contributions to the academic world.* (Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal Excerpt, 4/21/19).

Both Martin-Kerr (2016) and Gast's (2018) dissertation work was incredibly impactful to me during the analysis process. Martin-Kerr fomented in me, the belief in myself to get started—something that I had been struggling to feel ready for in the midst of my grief. Gast motivated me to write passionately as I craft my post-intentional phenomenological text. The two both demonstrated how to apply "thinking with theory," in post-intentional phenomenological research and ignited a feminist nod in me. In particular, Gast's work theorizing "A Feminist Awakening" in relation to her postpartum experience opened up space for me to theorize my experience of grief while exploring the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research (Gast, 2018, p.109).

Part 2: Thinking with theory. I used thinking with theory as a means to open up and explore the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research. Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) concept of thinking with theory involves carefully selecting theories that are connected to the phenomenon under investigation that can be drawn upon in order to open up, explore, and learn more about the phenomenon. Thinking with theory is not a simple process of plugging-in theory to sources of phenomenological material, rather it is a deep engagement and commitment to wrestling with the theories as you explore and learn more about the phenomenon.

In the design and proposal stage of this study, I anticipated that I would draw on Freire's (1970/1974) theory of critical consciousness, Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Banks (1996) theory of sociocultural consciousness, Ladson-Billings theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (1995/2014), and Cammarota and Fine's conceptualization of youth

participatory action research (2008). These are the theorists, theories, and concepts that became especially relevant while identifying a post-intentional phenomenon in context around a social issue, stating the research problem, and conducting a partial review of the literature. In the analysis phase, sometimes the theorists, theories, and concepts the researcher anticipated using change. In the recent months following the summer YPAR project, I experienced a life-altering loss. The unexpected passing of my older brother significantly changed me and the lens for which I see and navigate the world. Because of this, I continue to draw on the theories, theorists and concepts I anticipated thinking with as well as introduce new theories, theorists, and concepts that I drew heavily upon throughout the process of thinking with theory and analyzing my post-reflexions.

Part 3: Analyze your Post-Reflexions. Post-reflexions are artifacts of the researcher's assumptions, initial and ongoing understandings, connections and disconnections, and beginnings of interpretations (Vagle, 2018). Post-reflexion journal entries became especially important sources of phenomenological material in this study because this space most often captured shifts in my way of seeing, thinking, and being prior to and after losing my brother.

Component #5: Craft a Text that Engages the Productions and Provocations of the Post-Intentional Phenomenon in Context(s), around a Social Issue.

In chapter four and chapter six, I open up, explore, and share possibilities of the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research. In chapter four, I present sources of phenomenological material and explore productions and provocations of critical consciousness taking shape throughout the youth participatory action research project. I present post-reflexions that illuminate productions and provocations of critical

consciousness taking shape throughout the post-intentional phenomenological analysis of this study. The terms "productions" and "provocations" are further contextualized at the beginning of chapter four. In chapter five, I take time to teach about the brain and body from a neuroscience framework. In chapter six, I extend the presentation of productions and provocations of the phenomenon by putting theory to work with the phenomenological material. Reading the sources of phenomenological material across multiple theorists, allowed me to wrestle with specific theoretical concepts as a means of opening up multiple ways of understanding and seeing the possibilities of how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults engaged in youth participatory action research.

Because chapter four and chapter six focus primarily on this study's primary research question I have included the findings from the secondary research questions that were addressed by myself and the youth participants through our youth participatory action research project.

Summary of process and findings from three youth facilitated focus group interviews

This next section describes the process and findings from the youth participatory action research project that took place in the summer of 2017. Below is a brief summary of the project timeline for when the young people convened and the goals for group sessions. In what follows, are the findings for the secondary research questions of this study which come directly from the work of the youth participatory action research project.

Table 5
YPAR Project 2017 At A Glance

Time Period	Group Sessions
Week 1 (June 26th-29th)	Introductions to one another and our work, group norms (6/26/17); What is health? Local YPAR group panel presentation and discussion (6/27/17); Health Disparities, what keeps us healthy? What gets in our way? (6/28/17); Are health disparities impacting me and the people I care about? (6/29/17)
Week 2 (July 3rd-6th)	NO Program (7/3/17, 7/4/17), Program Wide Field Trip (7/5/17), Social Ecological Model (7/6/17)
Week 3 (July 10th-13th)	HS scholar presentation on Autism, visit from ED, Draft Research Questions (7/10/17); What makes a good research question? Revising Our Research Questions (7/11/17); Introduction to Data Collection Methods, Aligning Methods to Research Questions (7/12/17); Community Activism--Participated in "College Walk" through the city/ community celebration with local leaders and businesses) (7/13/17)
Week 4 (July 17th-20th)	Introduction to Focus Group Interviews, Determining Groups, Preparing Questions, Guides for Facilitators and Participants (7/17/17); Focus Group Interview #1 (co-ed) and #2 (girls) (7/18/17); Focus Group Interview #3 (boys) (7/19/17); Program Wide Field Trip (7/20/17)
Week 5 (July 24th-27th)	Introduction to Thematic Coding, Analyzing our Data (7/24/17); HS Field Trip to nearby University (7/25/17); Interview with high-ranking public official whose job it is to address health in the community (7/26/17); Program Wide Field Trip (7/27/17)
Week 6 (July 31st-Aug 3)	Debriefing Interview with high-ranking public official, Plan for Sharing Research Findings (7/31/17); Planning and Preparing for Our Community Presentation (8/1/17); Presentation Run-Through, Evening Community Dinner and Presentation (8/2/17); Program Finale Preparation and Celebration (8/3/17)

Secondary Research Question Findings from the YPAR Project[2]

The findings from the youth participatory action research project are presented below and organized by the three groups research participants elected to join (co-ed group, girl's group, boy's group.

[2] These findings are part of a published grant report, the title of which I do not share to protect the anonymity of research participants in this study.

Young people in the YPAR group had clear ideas about how to promote health and wellness. Health and wellness, they initially described as the result of personal choices and influenced by family. They did not connect health and wellness to broader community or social interactions and influences. Surprisingly, they did bring in these elements when they discussed barriers to health and wellness. Many indicated how pervasive violence, the persistent hypersexualized images of women, lack of information about health and wellness, especially around sexual health, and the lack of availability of accessible and affordable healthy food options play a role in the health of wellness of themselves and their peers.

YPAR RQ1: How do young people define health and well-being?

All three groups talked about health as an individual attribute and something that they can control and have control over. At first, few considered the larger impact of environmental and political factors had on their individual health, this shifted when the young people began to explore barriers to health and well-being in their community. The three groups all provided numerous ways of being healthy and maintaining well-being.

Co-Ed Focus Group: The most common responses from young people describing health and well-being included being active through exercise, playing sports, working out and engaging in brain stimulating activities like playing video games, going to school, reading, breathing and meditation, and problem-solving. Young people reiterated the importance of getting enough sleep and eating well. Other things young people discussed included going to the doctor, having balance in your life, finding time for peace and quiet, spending time with family, having healthy relationships, and being in a good environment (as defined by an individual).

Girls' Focus Group: When responding to this question young women emphasized an overall positive state of being over the span of an individual's lifetime. The young women emphasized being free of impairments such as disease and mental illness, living an active lifestyle including spending time outside and with friends, eating healthy, understanding and applying moderation to aspects of health. One participant described the importance of the ability to get through a lot (resiliency) and the ability to control one's response in a manner that doesn't harm the individual further.

Boys' Focus Group: Young men described health and well-being as experiencing happiness regularly as well as being able to participate in activities that contribute to overall well-being such as having time to oneself, having access to quality academic opportunities, reading, eating well, getting enough sleep, playing sports, exercising, getting outside. One participant described going to church as an activity that contributes to the experience of happiness.

Members of the YPAR groups clearly saw how they could control their own health and wellness and how family and friends contributed to wellness. They did not discuss the impact their community or society had on their own health, or how interactions within the community beyond family either served as a detriment or benefit to their health.

YPAR RQ2: What are young people doing on an everyday basis that contributes to their health and well-being?

Research participants described the numerous ways young people actively work to maintain their health and well-being. Most focused on individual choices and actions, they repeatedly named key places and spaces youth depend within their communities.

Co-Ed Focus Group: Young people discussed regularly going to parks, getting outside and being physically active as part of how they maintain their health and well-being in their everyday lives. Eating and drinking water came up and an important distinction was discussed among the young people. While it is ideal to eat healthy foods, one participant made sure to clarify that eating any food, even unhealthy foods, was more important than going hungry. Young people talked about having alone time, sleep, going to school and seeing the doctor on occasion.

Girls' Focus Group: Young women discussed the popularity of neighborhood parks among young people, either as a space to walk or bike around, spend time alone or with friends, to get fresh air, or to play. An underlying and sometimes explicit message the young women described was the importance for young people to stay active as a means of preventing negative influences from entering or controlling their lives, to "not be on the streets," "not to sell drugs." Along similar lines, the young women described the importance of having positive relationships and doing their best to stay away from individuals who may be engaging in risky behavior (drinking, doing drugs) or share beliefs that conflict with their own. The young women also described the importance of moderation in healthy and unhealthy food consumption and exercise. Young women also described working and learning being important to their development and wellbeing. One young woman made the distinction that it's not necessarily the more you know the better, but the importance of the "what" in your learning—suggesting what you know may be more important than how much you know.

Boys' Focus Group: Young men talked about the importance of getting and staying motivated in their everyday lives. For the young men participating playing sports,

exercising, getting enough sleep, and having enough to eat were key factors for maintaining their everyday health and wellbeing.

When asked to describe how they work toward or maintain health and well-being in their everyday lives, the groups all focused on health as an individual responsibility and came up with lots of ways they and others strive to be healthy. The data reveals that young people depend on city parks for exercise, fresh air, physical and social activities all of which contribute to their general health and well-being. Young people described institutional spaces such as schools and health clinics as necessary to their health and well-being. After naming many of the everyday actions young people take to work toward or maintain their health and well-being young people also described what they do when their health and well-being is compromised.

YPAR RQ3: What barriers to health and well-being do young people face?

All three groups drew more on social determinants when they talked about barriers to health. While health and well-being were understood to be largely individual, barriers tended to be described more broadly. Their understanding of what barriers young people living in a large Midwestern city encountered included descriptions of individual, social, and environmental factors. There was a significant difference in how boys and girls described barriers to health.

Co-Ed Focus Group: Young people named a lot of barriers they face in being healthy. These barriers included environmental barriers such as violence, specifically gun violence, gang violence, and abuse. Young people also described barriers such as police brutality, sexism, LBGQT discrimination, and financial insecurity. The young people described social barriers such as peer pressure, bullying, and negative relationships.

Young people described more individual barriers including suicide, teen pregnancy, playing too many violent video games, and consuming unhealthy foods. Young people also emphasized drug, alcohol and addiction as barriers to young people's health and well-being.

Girls' Focus Group: When discussing barriers to health and well-being, young women talked about the difficulty of making healthy decisions about what they consume in the face of readily access to affordable and unhealthy snacks. When the young women discussed mental, social and emotional health they tended to emphasize the difficulty young people experience while attempting to handle stress, challenges, and obstacles they encounter in their everyday lives. One young woman described how often not knowing how to respond to stress or difficult situations can lead to larger or more long-term struggle for young people that may have been avoidable. The young women described deflated self-esteem in part related to the images and messages they see through media representation of women and girls, specifically in relation to body image and notions of beauty.

When discussing barriers related specifically to females, the young women described access to reproductive health resources—including access to information, to care, and to safe sex and birth control resources like condoms and abortions. They young women talked about how access to reproductive health resources could completely change the trajectory of a young woman's life in a way that the young woman may not have chosen for herself. In addition, young women talked about feeling degraded by societal messages including the hyper-sexualization of women's bodies. A young woman talked about how societal attitudes toward women often leads to socially acceptable

behavior that is detrimental to the general health and well-being of women and girls. She described a documentary film in which a young boy groping a woman was portrayed as comical and how that perception positions girls and women more precariously. The young women described that these messages begin early and lead to problematic understandings of what is normal or how things are supposed to be.

Another young woman shared her personal experience with sexual assault as an elementary student. She talked about being touched constantly by young male classmates in "anyway they wanted to," and becoming used to that behavior because it happens so often—becoming less and less of a big deal eventually leading the young woman to describe feeling apathetic as a response but also recognizing the behavior and response to the behavior may be connected to more severe behavior like molestation and rape. Some unhealthy behaviors gain support and become sustainable because of the culture around not telling on others. This became a focus of the conversation around males groping females in their grade school. The young women described their perception of not understood by teachers, a general feeling that saying something will not stop the behavior and may negatively affect their status among peers, as well as an assumption that the inappropriate touching would go on as usual.

The young women talked a lot about relationships while discussing barriers to health and well-being. Broken down by relationships with significant others, relationships with parents, and relationships with friends the young women described different kinds of pressure and influence. One young woman described how difficult it is to be your own person when you are trying to fit in with a group of friends and how easy it is to be persuaded to do something you may not want to do or might not feel comfortable doing

when you're in a relationship with a significant other and you like them and want them to reciprocate that feeling. When young women talked about abusive relationships, they described the difficulty of coming forward or telling someone if someone is hurting you as well as the necessity of talking to someone as a means of ending the abuse.

When young women described drugs as a barrier, they discussed the danger of becoming addicted and dealing with addiction for a lifetime.

The young women also described how environmental factors, like global warming, are affecting themselves and society writ large in many ways, many of which are unknown. One young woman gave the example of the increasing number of her peers living with asthma. Another example included the increase in flooding and its' traumatic impact on entire communities.

Boys' Focus Group: Young men described a spectrum of barriers to their health and well-being ranging from the presence and pull of neighborhood gangs, negative things that may be happening within their families-like deaths, the pressure of trying to fit in with the wrong crowd, as well as playing too many video games, staying inside too much, and eating too much.

Gender differences appear most often when young people describe barriers to their health and well-being. Girls included aspects of health that boys did not, including hyper-sexualized images that pervade their social and media environments. They described these as having significant and profound impact on their health and creating barriers to their own well-being. Girls also talked about how sexual health education supported in their community and schools is understood to have lifelong health consequences for them. While sexual education is debated on moral grounds, these young

women simply asked to be provided with necessary information that would allow them to make informed choices and understand broader implications of their choices. This is especially clear to them when they discuss sexual health, pregnancy, and the impact this can have over their lifetime.

They distinguished between sexual health education and pregnancy. The group talked about whether or not pregnancy and teen motherhood was unhealthy, or if this is simply related more to how teen mothers are responded to and treated by society. The topic of sexual health opened a discussion among the young women about conversations that are and are not happening with parents and caretakers. Many of the young women described conversations around the topic of sex and sexual health as non-existent, uncomfortable and awkward, and generally avoided, however, most of the young women expressed frustration at the perceived differences between conversations they are and aren't having compared to conversations their male peers are having. One young woman described an informal interview experiment she conducted with peers around this very topic, her conclusion was that her male peers were more likely to have open conversations with family members about sex and more likely to be given information about healthy sexual practices. The young women were outraged that conversations about sex appeared to take on an informational and casual tone for their male peers while their own conversations sounded and felt very different. The young men appeared to have better information and availability to information than the young women.

Young men primarily described various forms of violence as the most significant barrier to their health and well-being. Young men discussed gun violence in their neighborhoods, the presence of gangs, being surrounded by negative influences, deaths in

their families, and peer pressure as significant barriers to young men's health and well-being.

While gender differences appeared to manifest in young people's descriptions of barriers to their health and well-being, the actions young people take to work toward maintaining their health and well-being appeared more universal.

YPAR RQ4: What healing strategies do young people use?

The group developed a lengthy list of strategies that they use to heal and support everyday health. Most of these remained focused on individual choice and actions. Few mentioned community-level strategies to support their health and healing.

Co-Ed Focus Group: Young people have many strategies for healing many of which can be described on an individual level. Many of the participants focused on finding a space to be alone when they are upset, some choosing to go to a space inside their home or outside for fresh air where they are able to walk away. Young people also talked about listening to music, writing, playing video games, and playing basketball. Young people described sometimes needing to physically yell, scream, or cry in order to get their feelings out. Participants sometimes talk to someone about their feelings or issues, friends or family.

Most participants did not choose to discuss sexual or spiritual healing strategies. When the topic of sexual health was raised young people had an energetic conversation. The young people debated over whether they prefer to discuss their sexual health with family, a doctor, or going online. Most of the participants who identified as female described talking to family about sex as awkward, weird, and in some cases not a topic for discussion. Generally, the female participants described a preference for looking up

sexual information they are seeking from an online source. Young people described learning about sex mostly from television shows, exposure to sexual content or activity, and conversations with friends at a young age (kindergarten), way before receiving any formal sexual education in school settings.

Girls' Focus Group: The young women discussed communication as a significant healing strategy and the importance of having a trusted individual in their lives. The young women discussed the danger of not being able to communicate and being left to cope with difficult situations or feelings alone, one young woman talked explicitly about experiencing suicidal thoughts and suicidal attempts that occurred when she wasn't communicating. Another young woman discussed how keeping it inside and not communicating may lead to a behavior you may later regret or may trigger you in a future situation which could cause more hurt. The young women also described that particular stresses or circumstances may be better to communicate with friends and some may be better to communicate with family weighing their personal relationships, the location of conflict, trust, and the type of support that may or may not occur noting that sometimes a positive presence may suffice.

The young women also described the importance of being able to physically remove themselves from conflict and stress. Removing oneself may mean going outside for a walk, getting fresh air, having alone time in a private space (a bedroom, bathroom), or going to a friend or family member's house. It was particularly important for young people to have time and space to remove oneself from conflict or stress before attempting to respond or resolve issues.

The young women talked about the importance of taking time to process their emotional reactions and their thoughts prior to taking action. One participant described writing down her problems and imagining that they were someone else's and then trying to come up with solutions for the issues as if they were not her own. She also described that writing something down allowed her to visualize the issue and let go of some of the weight from feeling the issue.

Young people also discussed that engaging in activities (such as singing) they love are healing practices young people utilize in their everyday lives.

Boys' Focus Group: When asked to describe different healing strategies related to physical, social, emotional, mental, spiritual and sexual well-being, one male participant was apologetic for what he felt may be perceived as a repetitive response but felt strongly about conveying the importance of sleep in each category of well-being.

The young men had a lengthy discussion about the importance of personal hygiene for physical as well as social and emotional well-being, emphasizing the presence of bullying among peers in relation to personal hygiene. For the young men it was important to avoid being talked about by peers and to avoid having their feelings being hurt if they can control it. For the most part the young men felt personal hygiene was something they and their peers had control over, unless they may be extenuating circumstances such as experiencing homelessness.

The young men talked about the influence of young people's environments on their health and well-being. One young man talked about being around people doing adult things or bad things and it being difficult to not give in to what everyone else is doing and

suggested that young people try as much as possible to surround themselves with people who are living a positive and healthy lifestyle.

The young men talked about having an outlet for dealing with stress or conflict, generally expressing a preference to engage in activity that calms them down or brings them joy (YouTube videos, playing video games, alone time) as opposed to discussing their struggles with another individual. When young men were pressed to think about circumstances communication may be important and with whom that communication might occur with, the young men described going to a parent or grandparents for support or advice.

Many of the healing strategies young people described focus on individual adaptations. Both young men and women described the importance of having a trusted individual in their lives to be able to communicate with or spend time with on a regular basis, however communication as a healing strategy was more commonly discussed among young women. Young people described a "good environment" as individually determined, if one feels happy and comfortable among the individuals and within the space they occupy than it is a "good environment" for that individual, that environment may look different depending on the individual. While acknowledged, young people did not mention how their community and society provided healing strategies.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodologies (post-intentional phenomenology and youth participatory action research) I used to develop primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question (post-intentional phenomenology) is: how might critical consciousness take shape for young people and adults through youth

participatory action research? The secondary research questions (youth participatory action research) are: (1) how do young people define health and well-being? (2) What are young people doing on an everyday basis that contributes to their health and well-being? (3) What barriers to health and well-being do young people face? And (4) What healing strategies do young people use? My participants were myself and fifteen young people who chose to participate in the youth participatory action research project. I presented a summary of findings, addressing each of the secondary research questions that the young people and I explored through a six-week summer YPAR project. I explained post-intentional phenomenology and why I chose it as the methodology for this study. I described Vagle's (2018) five components for designing and crafting a post-intentional phenomenological study and shared how I used the five steps to explore how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research. The sources of phenomenological material I gathered and analyzed include post-reflexion journal entries, focus group interviews, posters, and group discussions. I described my plan for presenting productions and provocations of the phenomenon and for thinking with theory. In Chapter 4, I present the four sources of post-intentional phenomenological material and provocations I gathered in this study.

Chapter 4 Interlude

I'm going to ask you, reader, to take a moment to pause and check-in with yourself. Please take some time to read and respond to the questions below.

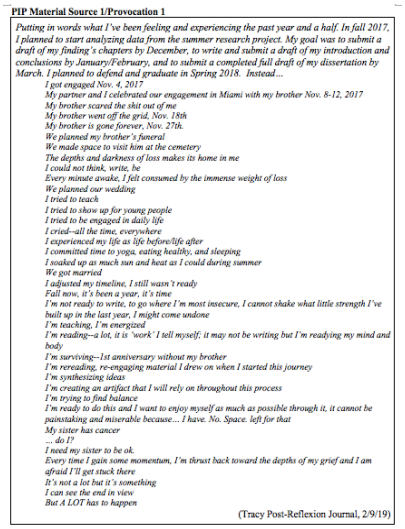
How are you feeling in this moment?

How would you describe your energy level?

How would you describe your capacity to bear witness in this current moment?

How much space do you have to read with your mind, body, spirit?

It is my hope that you have slowed down and spent time with these questions and the responses they evoke for you. You know better than I, whether you are ready to proceed. If you are still deciding, you may find it useful to refer to these two pages as a guide. This guide is intended to help you anticipate the content I present and the organizational choices I made.



PIP Material Source 1/Provocation 1

Putting in words what I've been feeling and experiencing the past year and a half. In fall 2017, I planned to start analyzing data from the summer research project. My goal was to submit a draft of my finding's chapters by December, to write and submit a draft of my introduction and conclusions by January/February, and to submit a completed full draft of my dissertation by March. I planned to defend and graduate in Spring 2018. Instead…

I got engaged Nov. 4, 2017
My partner and I celebrated our engagement in Miami with my brother Nov. 8-12, 2017
My brother scared the shit out of me
My brother went off the grid, Nov. 18th
My brother is gone forever, Nov. 27th.
We planned my brother's funeral
We made space to visit him at the cemetery
The depths and darkness of loss makes its home in me
I could not think, write, be
Every minute awake, I felt consumed by the immense weight of loss
We planned our wedding
I tried to teach
I tried to show up for young people
I tried to be engaged in daily life
I cried--all the time, everywhere
I experienced my life as life before/life after
I committed time to yoga, eating healthy, and sleeping
I soaked up as much sun and heat as I could during summer
We got married
I adjusted my timeline, I still wasn't ready
Fall now, it's been a year, it's time
I'm not ready to write, to go where I'm most insecure, I cannot shake what little strength I've built up in the last year, I might come undone
I'm teaching, I'm energized
I'm reading--a lot, it is 'work' I tell myself; it may not be writing but I'm readying my mind and body
I'm surviving--1st anniversary without my brother
I'm rereading, re-engaging material I drew on when I started this journey
I'm synthesizing ideas
I'm creating an artifact that I will rely on throughout this process
I'm trying to find balance
I'm ready to do this and I want to enjoy myself as much as possible through it, it cannot be painstaking and miserable because… I have. No. Space. left for that
My sister has cancer
… do I?
I need my sister to be ok.
Every time I gain some momentum, I'm thrust back toward the depths of my grief and I am afraid I'll get stuck there
It's not a lot but it's something
I can see the end in view
But A LOT has to happen

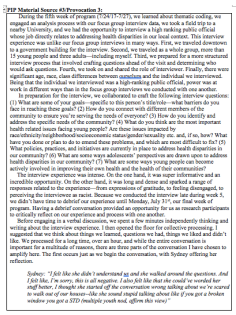
(Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal, 2/9/19)

#1 The first thing you're going to notice is that I abruptly share the first source of post-intentional phenomenological (PIP) material. It is an excerpt from my post-reflexion journal, written in February 2019. This source is intentionally placed here without any unpacking above or below it; it may feel like it's misplaced. In many ways, the physical placement of this source in the chapter is representative of how I have

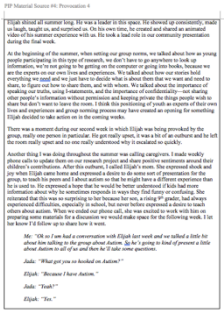
been and continue to grieve the loss of my brother. It is always present, sometimes in tension and almost always competing with other emotions I'm experiencing and things I wish to be doing. I will unpack this source of PIP material, but it won't happen until chapter six. My suggestion is for you to read it and let it be a glimpse into my mind, body, spirit as I crafted this chapter.

After PIP source #1, I spend a few pages writing about why I want to slow down and examine how critical consciousness might take shape. I orient you to the post-intentional language I am using and what it means (provocations and productions) and I remind you of the primary and secondary research study questions. Then come sources of PIP material #2, #3, and #4. In my presentation of these PIP materials, I want you to feel ushered into the material and I ask that you sit in it, spend time with yourself as you read. I do not deeply theorize in this chapter. In Chapter Six, I play and put theory to work. Right now, it is most important that you settle in with the PIP materials.

#2 is storied material from a discussion from the girls' discussion group.



#3 is a storied debrief discussion among the large group, processing their interview experience of a high-ranking public official whose work is to address health disparities in the community.



#4 captures a young male research participant's decision to teach us about Autism.

Chapter 4

Provocations

PIP Material Source 1/Provocation 1

Putting in words what I've been feeling and experiencing the past year and a half. In fall 2017, I planned to start analyzing data from the summer research project. My goal was to submit a draft of my findings by December, to write and submit a draft of my introduction and conclusions by January/February, and to submit a completed full draft of my dissertation by March. I planned to defend and graduate in Spring 2018. Instead…

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I can see the end in view
But A LOT has to happen

(Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal, 2/9/19)

In this chapter I present sources of phenomenological material collected throughout the study as a means to open up, explore, and learn more about how critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research. The sources can be conceptualized as "productions" and "provocations" of the phenomenon at work (Vagle, 2018). Holding post-structural commitments in this conceptualization means that we understand these productions and provocations are incomplete, variable, multiple, and contextual. In this manner, as I present productions and provocations, you will read them—already starting in the middle—with your unique lenses, shaped by the multiplicities of your identities and experiences, feelings of connectedness and disconnection. To support this process of entering in the middle, it is important to grapple with how these concepts are conceived.

> Provocation: an intensity or catalyst
>
> Production: the ongoing ways in which the phenomenon is shaped over time
>
> (Vagle, 2018)

The findings from this post-intentional phenomenological study provide insights and possibilities for how the phenomenon manifests. In this chapter, I present four sources of phenomenological material to capture moments in which the phenomena was at work, moments in which critical consciousness was provoked, taking shape for young people throughout the summer research project experience and for myself, over the summer and really until the moment in which I paused and crafted this text. I usher the reader into four sources of post-intentional phenomenological material and offer additional context and important ideas emerging through investigating the phenomenon.

A goal for this chapter is to offer important considerations, possibilities, and insights for how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research. It is also to acknowledge, bring forth, and elevate the immense capacity of young people to *do* important work and *be* agentic participants in their own lives and within our society.

Sources of Post-Intentional Phenomenological Materials

1. Post-reflexion journal entry
2. Excerpt of discussion immediately following girls' focus group interview
3. Excerpt of discussion reflecting on experience interviewing a high-ranking public official whose job it is to address health in the local context
4. Excerpt of youth presentation on autism

Post-intentional phenomenologists understand phenomena to be circulating, shifting, expanding and contracting in our world through ourselves, objects, experiences, our interactions at all times. Critical consciousness is taking shape all the time, in obvious and less obvious ways. This source of post-intentional phenomenological material provokes. The role of the phenomenologist is to bring their self as fully as possible when analyzing the material to open up, learn from, and explore the provocations.

PIP Material Source #2

It was the fourth week (7/17/17-7/20/17) of the summer program. It was an exciting week because we had been working hard to build relationships with one another and learn about YPAR with the help of a local community group who explored sexual exploitation. At this point we had been exploring the topic of health and barriers to health and well-being by reflecting on our individual experiences as well as examining the topic using a social-ecological model. Just last week, we drafted and revised our research questions, explored potential data collection methods and

determined that we wanted to use focus groups. We bonded in an entirely new way when our research team created college signs and marched with multi-generational community members from the local neighborhood to a nearby city community college where we became part of a rally that was planned to disrupt deficit views of our local (historically marginalized) neighborhood and showcase the brilliant young people who have bright aspirations and are working toward accomplishing their dreams.

On Monday, we explored focus group interviews in more depth. We talked about the role of participants and facilitators, explored unstructured vs. structured interviewing, and the importance of open-ended questioning. Afterward, we organized into small groups and performed mock focus group interviews to familiarize ourselves with the process and to work through any kinks that may present themselves. When we wrapped up the mock interview experience, we reflected on what worked, didn't work, moves we made in response to challenges, etc. The group concluded that they would want a quiet space with few distractions, that participants would need to stay on topic, be mindful of one another's participation, and listen carefully to one another. That evening when I debriefed the day with the rest of the program staff (working with k-8 students), I was able to share these insights and the team worked together on a logistics plan so that the focus group interviews could occur.

On Tuesday morning, Sydney facilitated the first focus group interview for seven of her peers (four boys and three girls). She was a phenomenal interviewer and excited about being able to both facilitate a focus group and be a participant. On Tuesday afternoon, Jada facilitated the second focus group interview for five of her peers (all girls, including Sydney). At the start of the interview, Sydney shared advice for the group based on her experience in the focus group that morning. Both focus groups were successful in illuminating important insights on adolescent experiences of health, well-being, barriers to health and well-being, and healing strategies. The girls' focus group interview was really quite astounding to witness. The girls did not shy away from sensitive and painful topics such as bullying, suicide, and sexual assault. They were vulnerable with one another by sharing incredibly personal experiences

throughout the focus group interview. At the end of the focus group interview, Sydney had something she felt she needed to share.

> *Sydney: "Um, I want to say something about bystanders because I don't know, I don't know why but it's just in my head, I just thought about it 'cause I feel like every time I look at a person I prejudge them based on what I'm taught to judge them and like when Kayla was talking about stuff, it was like stuff everybody else was saying and I don't know… it's just like I prejudged you before I even met you just because you're a different skin color as me and I think, yeah--I should stop doing that.*

I responded to Sydney by asking her what she thought 'that' was, was it stereotypes we are exposed to and start to internalize? This is what Sydney had to say.

> *Sydney: "Yeah, like what I grew up to know is that people of ya'll skin color talk like this and stuff, and people of ya'll skin color are rich or get what they want and always have blonde hair and really don't be having problems or evil, or, yeah, just stuff like that."*

I responded, affirming her articulation *"mmm, m'hm."* I then described how it seems like what she's describing in many ways frames the way we interact with people, the way we understand people, the way we listen… or don't listen to people. I am reminded of a moment in the girl's focus group conversation when they talked about barriers specific to girls—they named the hyper-sexualization of women portrayed through media. I talked about this part of their conversation and how these images and messages of women influence the way we interpret, see ourselves, and define ourselves against the standards being portrayed. I suggest there may be a connection to what Sydney has named as her own prejudgment. This sparks more dialogue within the group.

Tiana expresses her initial concern when Kayla (a white student from a neighboring community) joined the research team.

> *Tiana: "No, like when she first came, I wanted to like, be her friend because I just, I just felt like it was going to be hard, just cause I don't know, I just thought it was going to be hard and I just wanted her to feel welcomed and let her know that she don't have to like worry about anything or things like that."*

Tiana then shares more personal context for her view, providing a glimpse at why she imagined this might be hard for Kayla.

> *Tiana: "Cause like, I'm biracial but the um like the Caucasian side of my family is really prejudiced so I never met them and so like it was really, I don't know, I don't know."*

I acknowledge Tiana, *"that's hard."* Tiana's sharing of her biracial identity provides an opening for Sydney to begin articulating where her prejudgments may come from.

> *Sydney: "Plus my mom is like… extra like, not... because of stuff like that's happened in our family she's prejudiced. Because like, I'm adopted, so she's older so like her ex-husband got beat by a whole bunch of white people when he was walking from (local neighborhood) to (another local neighborhood) when they was younger and stuff and so like stuff like that has made her kind of prejudiced to white people. And stuff that have happened in like her jobs and stuff. It's like a lot of stuff that I get, I get it from her, but like I don't do it no more because she's a little over ridiculous."*

After this statement multiple group members talk about the importance of making a point to try and connect with people. The discussion suggests the participants believe that you don't really know someone or what they have gone or are currently going through—regardless of what they look like—until you get to know them. This then sparks more connections among the group.

> *Sydney: "Yeah and I feel like too, when you're like extra pretty and a lot of people like you, I feel like you get pre-judged too."*
>
> *Tiana: "Yeah, cause they be like 'oh she think she all that'"*
>
> *Sydney: "…Oh. And light skins and dark skins, we, I think we prejudge each other."*
>
> *Jada: "No, we had a whole big ol' argument with _____ on the bus."*
>
> *Sydney: "I swear to god it was the whole ride."*
>
> *Jada: "Cause he said 'that's that light skin stuff, you too hype'*
>
> *Sydney: "So me and Jada went off like, 'what is that light skin stuff?'"*

Jada: "Kids on the bus were like (screams, emphasizes multiple involvement)."

Sydney: "like we had the whole bus turnt that day."

Jada: "so he turns around like, 'what's the big deal?'"

Sydney: "Why is it NOT a big deal? It should be a big deal because why is we separating ourselves like from each other. We just regular people, period."

Jada: "Yeah, but then he says, 'it don't even matter 'cause my mom is light skinned.' So why even say that's that light skin stuff?"

I make a move to both/and the conversation and check the time. We need to meet the rest of our group for lunch.

Tiana: "What you was going to say Ms. Tracy?"

Me: "Well I was just going to say it's kind of like a both/and, right like cause you were saying we need to stop prejudging people because you never know what someone's life has been like and so try to remove what you've been trained to think about somebody based on what they look like and just know them for who they are but at the same time like… race does matter. Like we live in a society where if you're white you have privilege to things that people of color don't have privilege to and there's systemic racism and that lives out in policies and practices that have real implications so it's like yes, we need to see each other as people, as human, and connect with one another and race doesn't have to be a barrier but it also does matter, right? We don't get to change the color of our skin and the color of skin does produce experiences for us, you know? So it's kind of like it's both, it doesn't matter and it does matter."

The discussion comes to a close as we pack up our materials and make our way out of the room.

(Group Discussion Post Girls' Group Focus Interview, 7/18/17, 41:35-48:38)

In this excerpt above, there are several moments that have a gravitas to them. The first provocation occurs when Sydney recognizes and then confesses her realization that she's judged another member of the group, Kayla. Kayla is a white youth participant who does not live in the same neighborhood the other youth live in. Sydney—a young Black woman—identifies a prejudgment she's made about Kayla—a young white woman. This

is a paradoxical, eye-opening, concerning, and even predictable moment. Even as critical consciousness was provoked and taking shape the power of whiteness was at work.

> *Sydney: I feel like every time I look at a person, I prejudge them based on what I'm taught to judge them*

Sydney goes on to get more specific about what she's learned to think about white people.

> *Sydney: Yeah, like what I grew up to know is that people of ya'll skin color talk like this and stuff, and people of ya'll skin color are rich or get what they want and always have blonde hair and really don't be having problems or evil, or, yeah, just stuff like that.*

After Sydney recognizes and names the specific stereotypes that have been framing how she sees white people she does this amazing thing. It's as if she is peeling back the layers of an onion, the first layer being recognizing the prejudice. The second, naming it in front of her peers and me. The third, getting specific about the stereotypes contributing to her prejudice. Then beginning to articulate the roots of where her beliefs stem from.

> *Sydney: "Plus my mom is like… extra like, not... because of stuff like that's happened in our family she's prejudiced. Because like, I'm adopted, so she's older so like her ex-husband got beat by a whole bunch of white people when he was walking from (local neighborhood) to (another local neighborhood) when they was younger and stuff and so like stuff like that has made her kind of prejudiced to white people. And stuff that have happened in like her jobs and stuff. It's like a lot of stuff that I get, I get it from her, but like I don't do it no more because she's a little over ridiculous."*

Sydney teaches us powerful lessons. For one, she makes herself vulnerable to the group by publicly acknowledging this awareness of her prejudice. She shows us how her further processing allows her to begin to see and understand why it is she has come to 'see' in this way. She, with empathy and great care, describes how her family's experiences have shaped her views and that her default consciousness also absorbed these views. Something incredibly powerful that is provoked is that the experience of discussing

health, well-being and barriers to health and well-being, with a group of peers (one of whom is a white, middle-upper class, living in a nearby but different neighborhood of the same city) creates a confrontation for her. Suddenly, the views about white people do not fit with her experience interacting with Kayla. She starts to see that Kayla shares many of the same challenges as a similarly aged young woman.

> *when Kayla was talking about stuff, it was like stuff everybody else was saying and I don't know… it's just like I prejudged you before I even met you just because you're a different skin color as me and I think, yeah—I should stop doing that.*

This confrontation—the moment in which her experience no longer fits with the story she's been told about how white people talk, act, and experience life—allows her to see what she believed, where it came from, and ask whether her experiences fit with those of her family's. Agency is being provoked, through becoming aware of her prejudice, Sydney also gets to decide how her experiences do and do not connect with her family's experiences. Sydney has a choice to alter the lens for which she continues to see and move through the world with.

Sydney's willingness to be vulnerable with our group provokes other important connections. Tiana names her biracial identity and a painful reality that she is not able to have relationships with the white side of her family because of the deeply racist views they hold. Sydney and Jada recall a recent interaction they had with another kid in the program on the bus. This is another moment in which something important is provoked.

> *Sydney: "…Oh. And light skins and dark skins, we, I think we prejudge each other."*

The youth are naming colorism and processing how it operated in that moment as well as the impact it has more broadly in their lives.

Sydney: "Why is it NOT a big deal? It should be a big deal because why is we separating ourselves like from each other. We just regular people, period."

These provocations teach us about how critical consciousness can take shape for young people and adults. I offer readings of these gravitas moments that you may read differently—and however we read them, the phenomenon is present—shifting, expanding and contracting—as we work our way through.

PIP Material Source #3

During the fifth week of program (7/24/17-7/27), we learned about thematic coding, we engaged an analysis process with our focus group interview data, we took a field trip to a nearby University, and we had the opportunity to interview a high ranking public official whose job directly relates to addressing health disparities in our local context. This interview experience was unlike our focus group interviews in many ways. First, we traveled downtown to a government building for the interview. Second, we traveled as a whole group, more than 15 young people and three adults—including myself. Third, we prepared for a more structured interview process that involved crafting questions ahead of the visit and determining who would ask questions. Fourth, we took on and shared the role of interviewer. Finally, there were significant age, race, class differences between most of the young people and the individual we interviewed. Being that the individual we interviewed was a high-ranking public official, power was at work in different ways than in the focus group interviews we conducted with one another.

In preparation for the interview, we collaborated to craft the following interview questions: (1) What are some of your goals—specific to this person's title/role—what barriers do you face in reaching these goals? (2) How do you connect with different members of the community to ensure you're serving the needs of everyone? (3) How do you identify and address the specific needs of the community? (4) What do you think are the most important health related issues facing young people? Are these issues impacted by race/ethnicity/neighborhood/socioeconomic status/gender/sexuality etc. and, if so, how? What have you done or plan to do to

emend these problems, and which are most difficult to fix? (5) What policies, practices, and initiatives are currently in place to address health disparities in our community? (6) What are some ways adolescents' perspectives are drawn upon to address health disparities in our community? (7) What are some ways young people can become actively involved in improving their own health and the health of their communities?

The interview experience was intense. On the one hand, it was super informative and an incredible opportunity. On the other hand, it was long and dense and sparked a range of responses related to the experience—from expressions of gratitude, to feeling disengaged, to perceiving the interviewee as racist. Because we conducted the interview late during week 5, we didn't have time to debrief our experience until Monday, July 31st, our final week of program. Having a debrief conversation provided an opportunity for us as research participants to critically reflect on our experience and process with one another.

Before engaging in a verbal discussion, we spent a few minutes independently thinking and writing about the interview experience. I then opened the floor for collective processing. I suggested that we think about things we learned, questions we had, things we liked and didn't like. We processed for a long time, over an hour, and while the entire conversation is important for a multitude of reasons, there are three parts of the conversation I have chosen to amplify here. The first occurs just as we begin the conversation, with Sydney offering her reflection.

> *Sydney: I felt like she didn't understand us, and she walked around the questions. And I felt like, I'm sorry, this is all negative. I also felt like that she could've worded her stuff better, I thought she started off the conversation wrong talking about we're scared to walk out of our houses—like she sound stupid talking about like if you got a broken window you got a STD (multiple youth nod, affirm this view)*
>
> *Laila: (kind of quietly with what I interpret as a sad tone, says to the person next to her) I had a broken window… and I still do*
>
> *Sydney: She said some ridiculous stuff. Like how said she got a big grant and what she do with the grant is put up a bike store in the hood. What we look like we need a bike store for? (laughter) We could of did a whole bunch of other stuff with that money.*

I listen and I make a move to clarify my understanding. I start with the familiar, "What I've heard so far and correct me if I'm missing anything," before I summarize what Sydney has expressed: she didn't understand us, she kind of led wrong the way she started, and you really didn't like the broken window theory or at least the way she explained it. Sydney replies,

> *Sydney: She beat around the bush! She started off wrong. I felt like she didn't really understand us because she never really been over (historically marginalized local neighborhood), like lived there. Like if you never really lived there and your colleagues are telling you something because they know from experience that doesn't mean nothing, because to actually know something...you have to actually experience it.*

I recognize a disconnection between my own perception of what the interviewee was saying and what the young people heard. I want to check with the group to see if I have it straight. First, I make sure to acknowledge the perception, "I agree with what you've said so far," then I remind them of how she described living in another part of the city and how where she lives there are many lakes nearby, and that feels safe to walk around the lake by herself, no matter the time of day or night. Sydney is so offended she can't wait for me to finish the thought before stating,

> *Sydney: That was stupid. When she said that, I looked at her like… my bro lives by a lake and it's over (historically marginalized local neighborhood) and I can walk anytime.*

I signal to Sydney and the rest of the group that I understand her reaction *and* I push a little.

> *Me: But what I heard her trying to, what I heard from that was her trying to say these are the things that I am able to do in my everyday life and I know that that is not everyone else's experience and now the way that I'm hearing you feel like that was interpreted was like..*
>
> *Sydney: ...like she was talking down on us.*

Sydney jumps in again because in the process of the interviewee naming her privilege and positionality, she simultaneously distanced herself from the audience of young

people. The example she used to describe how where she lives, she is close to lakes and a description of her neighborhood as safe made the young people feel she had a deficit—raced and classed—view of the group. I respond to this perception.

> *Me: Yeah, and I see why you read it that way. I read her as saying that more like, 'you're right, I don't know what it's like because this is my life,' and so I thought she was trying to say like, 'part of my job is to understand, or try to understand what it's like because my experience is not everyone's experience. I don't know.*

It is interesting because maybe it is my proximity to this woman—my whiteness, my middle-classness, my age—that my perception here is different. I am used to naming whiteness and the privileges it affords me, in fact, it's an important action to take in most all the spaces I move through—especially in courses I am facilitating with preservice teachers on topics such as social class, diversity, and education. However, I can also understand why her articulation felt… wrong, and why Sydney would want to name that and to push back on it. I can see that more members have reflections to share and I prompt Jada.

> *Jada: Ok, so you know, like I said, she was beating around the bush for questions and um like, ok, so one question that really stuck to me was when we asked what is the difference between her and the last _____ (job title removed for anonymity) (group: 'yeah')... all she could come up with was gender and that kind of bothered me, that's how I knew she wasn't mentally ready for this because she should have took it more seriously so then yeah. And then, she's been there for (a number of) years and the only thing she has done for the __(many) years she has been there is that little bike thing.*

I push a little here, this individual is doing a lot more than what the group has taken away from the conversation. It is interesting that acknowledging the gender difference between her and the last person in her position does not land with the group, it is not 'enough,' and Jada goes on to express that somehow this makes her feel she isn't taking her job seriously. The group goes on to talk about the tobacco initiatives she discussed and sort of dismisses this as an issue impacting them as adolescents—*'no one even do tobacco.'* Then Madison shares her reflection.

Madison: It seem like we asked questions and she didn't answer the way we wanted her to answer. We asked questions and she didn't answer them the way we wanted them to be said she was like answering different questions.

Madison's comment seems to build on the notion that the individual 'was beating around the bush' while answering questions. The group adds on.

Sydney: Like we asked her about one thing and she starts talking about another.
Madison: It seemed like she was getting frustrated.
Sydney: Yeah, because I asked bomb questions.
Jada: She was shook
Me: Do you think she was nervous?
Multiple youth: Yes
Sydney: I feel like when we came there she thought we was going to do one thing but when we got there and actually started asking questions she didn't think those questions were going to come up from us.
"Yeah, she was nervous, she was probably nervous cause all of the people."
Laila: She talks and have meetings with groups of different adults, what makes her nervous for this one?
"We're kids!"

I'm reading this in a few ways. First, I'm thinking about how the young people are perceiving the interviewee as caught off guard by their questions and while they don't name this, it makes me think they suspect she has underestimated them. Second, I'm noticing that the youth are aware she may have been uncomfortable, while one young person suggests maybe this was because they were a large group, Laila pushes back on this—saying her years of experience should have been enough to prepare her for this interaction. Again, while the young people do not name this, this exchange makes me wonder if the young people are observing her discomfort and attributing it at least in part to their age, race/ethnicity, social class. At this point, I am aware that the majority of the conversation taking place has been negative. I don't know why I feel the need to pull out reflections that break away from the path we've been on, but I do. I make a hard press.

Me: Ok, so it sounds like we got a lot of what we didn't like about the experience out, what about, we're going to switch to things we appreciated or learned from the experience, Sydney you can start us off.

Sydney: About the whole health equity and um and that she thought also that influences everything and that she wants to make a new future. For the third question, when she was talking about how she reflects on the data, like she might think about it one way the first time but when she goes back and reflects on it, I thought that was really good, a good strategy.

Me: Yeah, what else? So Sydney talked about how one of the key things she talked about was how like she called it the social fabric and she said when you talk about health disparities or health inequities they are all connected to one another and that makes them very difficult and challenging to address and a positive of that is when you address one thing you're already impacting something else inherently.

Sydney: And that leads to a chain reaction

Me: Yeah, and so she said its kind of a good thing and a difficult thing. She also talked about the importance of historical context. Which I thought was really important and not something we have talked a ton about. She talked about, remember when she drew the maps? ("Yep") and she said you could take any health marker and track it from however many years until now and it still shows up in the same areas

Sydney: Because she said we weren't allowed to have houses and that impacted our future because not being allowed to have houses, I don't know.

Me: Yeah, she said way back when banks were deciding who would get mortgages and where people could live, there was an under investment in two neighborhoods, right? And she said that even though they can trace things back to that, it still continues to be a problem we see today. What else?

Sydney was willing to go there, to look for positives throughout the interaction. Yet, I do more of the heavy lifting here and you can see that in the volume of text next to my name vs. Sydney's in addition to the lack of other voices chiming in. Immediately after this, Elijah jokes that the only fun part of the experience was the walk there and back and that leads the group off track, and lightens the mood as well, they laugh a bit before I bring them back.

Me: Ok, so other than getting lost, what were. We still don't have a lot of things by positive and learned. So actually, Malik, you can say what Sydney said under learned, 'social fabric is interconnected—woven together,' and 'historical context matters' Do you understand what that means? Write it in a way that makes sense to you.

While Malik charts the group starts chatting amongst themselves. I struggle to bring them back again.

> *Elijah: Let Ms. Tracy talk.*
> *Laila: Be quiet ya'll!*
> *Elijah: Let Ms. Tracy talk!*
> *Me: I want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to share about their experience if you have something to share so, um, for those of you who have not shared yet, I'd like to hear from you: what did you learn? What did you like? What didn't you like? What questions do you still have? I want to hear from (lists names of kids who haven't talked).*

I am not sure what it reveals, but I do find it interesting how Elijah and Laila exert their voices to help me in this moment. In the conversation that follows Kayla shares that she appreciated the information the interviewee provided and her willingness to take time to meet with us. She reflects on learning a little about the information shared around historical context and its' impact on current health disparities and expresses a desire to have spent more time on that. I think.

> *Kayla: Something I liked was that she seemed like she was glad to be there and that she wanted to share all this information she had with us even though um there were a lot of us since not all of us were participating a lot of people weren't the most happy to be there and she still wanted to provide as much information and make it a good experience for us. I wish she would have talked more about the long-term effects of health disparities" (Adds other info, speaking quietly hard to decipher via recording)*
> *Um, it was interesting to hear about the historical background and I would've like to talk about that more.*

I make a move to pull more from the young people who have not shared their reflections. As I do this, the group reflects on their interviewing process. Specifically, how we may have deviated from our semi-structured plan and asked repetitive questions because we weren't listening closely to one another.

> *Jada: If I was her, I would've been like 'ya'll asking me the same questions' but just because she knew the answer to that question she kept on answering the same question.*
> *Sydney: …because we wasn't listening to each other. Someone asked a question and another person asked it another way.*
> *Me: So what does that tell you about our areas of growth as interviewers.*

Laila: The questions we had on the paper weren't the same but right after she got done answering something someone would raise their hand and ask the exact same questions in different words.
Sydney: Because they wasn't paying attention

I want to celebrate this reflective process because I see it as an opportunity. We have been talking for a while now and the group is less focused. I'm having to do more to bring us together.

Me: So one of the things I noticed, is. Excuse me, I don't interrupt you when you're speaking, please do not interrupt me. That's all I'm asking. I felt like we planned for a semi-structured interview. We came up with the questions in advance, we came up with who would be asking them and when and then we got to the interview we abandoned the plan. People started asking their own questions, people started asking like either because they were interested or because they wanted to participate—but we didn't stick to our plan. As an interviewer, that's really important because otherwise you may not be able to collect the data that you needed to collect if you get off task. So, we went more as an open-ended interview structure instead of the semi-structured plan and because of that we didn't ask all our questions so as researchers this is a good learning experience. When you have a research question and you're data collection method is to interview, you need to know are you going into this interview as an open-ended interview where you can ask whatever comes up or are you going into this with questions in mind. If so, you are responsible for asking all of these questions, otherwise you don't have the correct data. So, I think this was a good learning experience for future research you may conduct.

I make a move, again, to make space for voices that have not yet been heard.

Me: Malik, did you want to share what you thought of the experience?
Malik: At first, I didn't have a problem with it.
Me: At first you didn't have a problem with it?
Malik: I didn't but then it started getting boring and then I just I was listening to the questions and her responses and they weren't making sense. I started drawing but I was still listening.
Me: Do you think drawing was a method to stay focused or to like?
Malik: I was just trying not to make anyone laugh.

In general, I find this exchange interesting. For one, I think it reveals something about my relationships with the young men participating in the project. I have to work a lot harder to draw them in than I do with most of the girls. I think this is no fault of theirs—this is more an indication of the relationships I have with them. However,

Malik was really skeptical about the summer research experience at the beginning of summer. In the time this is happening, not only does he contribute, he has been our notetaker for the conversation leading up until now. He may not be 'all in' but he's with us. I think Malik's response here suggests that he was also turned off by the conversation at some point, 'at first I didn't have a problem with it,' but he doesn't explicitly say when it shifted. He describes drawing as a tool, a mechanism he relied on—and that seems like it could have implications for adults working with young people. I'm reading that Malik has shared what he wants to share and I move on.

> *Me: Jaden, what did you think? You had some good questions.*
> *Jaden: It was good information there was a lot of stuff I didn't know. Like about the bike shop. I liked that we could ask questions, like our own questions in response to her.*

Jaden wants to provide just the positive aspects of his reflections. I don't press and invite another young man, Xavier, into the conversation.

> *Xavier: that lady was racist*

I am not surprised to hear this. I feel this sentiment has been running through the conversation the whole time, Xavier is the first willing and able to name it.

> *Me: What makes you say that? Tell us what made you feel that way*
> *Xavier: The way she said it was racist.*
> *Me: The way she said what?*
> *Xavier: The way she was like. What did she say?*
> *Another kid: the broken windows?*
> *Xavier: Yeah the stuff she was saying about the neighborhood, the broken windows, the HIV.*

I press because I want to know exactly when Xavier, and I presume the other young folks at the table, started perceiving the interviewee in this way. I recall her bringing up the broken window theory during the interview and also feeling uncomfortable and just…yucky in that moment.

> *Me: When she was explaining the window… how come you all didn't follow that up and ask her about that?*
> *Another kid: She's racist!*

Me: It sounded like you guys were…
Xavier: It's my turn, can you all shut up, be quiet. I don't care, it's my turn.
Me: I'm wondering, how many of you were offended when she talked about the broken window theory?
(A lot of chatter)

Xavier catches some heat from the group for being fired up in this moment, he has asked Elijah (and there's a tension between the two) to shut up, the group prioritizes Elijah's potential reactivity because of what he has shared about his challenge responding calmly in situations like this, and this upsets Xavier. However, I imagine that he is also worked up because we have spent so much time processing the interview and this whole time he has been thinking, 'that lady was racist!' It seems ridiculous to me—now, that I asked why they did not follow up in that moment? I was simultaneously uncomfortable/confused why she was bringing up the broken window theory and I did not say anything…

Laila: That stuff ain't true.

Elijah: Ms. Tracy, can I say something. Ok, so for the broken windows theory. I gotta be honest though. Some people do have some broken windows, for example, at my old house I used to have broken windows because someone threw a sock full of rocks through the window because they were starting problems. Like um, because, the reason I'm not offended by that is because it happens daily, sometimes daily, it might be an accident, might be on purpose.

I'm reading Elijah as trying to figure out how what she said does and does not fit with his experiences. He shares, like other young people have, that he has had a broken window. He wonders if there might be some truth to what she's suggested. I help him to understand why his peers were upset.

Me: Ok, but what I heard people saying was that they thought it was bogus that she said if you have a broken window, you're more likely to have an STD.

Elijah: Oh no, she is not supposed to be saying that.

Next, we witness the tension building for Xavier. He responds to his frustration powerfully; he has had enough.

Xavier: It's my turn bro. (there is tension between Elijah and Xavier, the group intervenes)
Me: Ok, let's go back to Xavier because he is the one who raised this concern.
Xavier: Forget it.
Me: Is there anything else that you wanted to add?
Xavier: I'm done.

As Xavier tunes out, other young people keep the conversation going. They talk some more about how they feel she didn't answer their questions directly and went off on tangents. We talk about how when someone has these long responses to questions, it poses a challenge for us as interviewers to both listen, take notes, and know where to take the conversation next.

Laila: I just feel like overall; it was kind of a bad interview because she took 10 to 20min. to answer the questions, and she didn't give it. Like I could understand if she got to the answer, but nah, she want to talk about something else so we're all just sitting there until she says 'so, my answer is…' it was really…

Me: Yeah, when someone talks for 20mins and you have a question and you're trying to write a bullet response, it's really hard when they talk for a long time.

Jada: Yeah, I was confused about what to write and what not to write. She was going off topic and then I didn't have room on my paper.

Me: Right. She was long winded in her responses, but we also asked questions that were not on the list.

Laila: We asked questions that wasn't on the list because we were trying to understand what she was saying.

Me: And that's good, those are follow up questions and that's an important interviewing skill. What I wish would have come up was clarification around the broken windows because it sounded like that really upset people or confused people and I think it would have been a good opportunity to ask, 'what do you mean? So how do you guys feel, based on what you got to see and know of her, how do you feel about her being in the position she's in?

I push us to see the frustrations as a learning opportunity. I validate that the young people were doing the best they could and that it was difficult but that we can use the experience to hone our interviewing skills. One of the adult chaperones who was present chimes in.

Adult chaperone: I think she needs to learn how to communicate with people outside of older white people, she needs to learn how to engage people from all different backgrounds. (kids snap). She obviously didn't know how to talk to you guys. She needs to engage with youth, learn how to talk and engage with young people.

This adult chaperone identifies as a Black male. The kids snap when he makes his remarks, this has not happened yet in the conversation and I am reading it as an important moment; one in which the kids feel heard and understood. I add on, suggesting that someone in this position should be experienced and comfortable talking with young people on these issues.

Me: And for me, it's like you've been doing this job for __ many years, how many times have you sat in a room with a bunch of young people and listened to them tell you their stories? (kids shout NONE!)

Laila: And then I felt, just the way how she is, she's comfortable and don't find it offensive the way how she's talking to us, or what she has to say because she's so used to talking to the elder, you know white people. You know that whole broken window had a lot of kids offended, but she doesn't know that, and it was just, you know…

Laila's comment is layered. I read what she has added as not only identifying the broken windows theory as problematic, she suggests that the interviewee does not even know to anticipate how that might be offensive, which teaches us about critical consciousness.

Me: But you know, to me, this makes me feel like 'ok… this is who is in charge of addressing health disparities in our communities and so what does that tell us?

Sydney: That she's no different than the last one.

Me: Maybe she's not different than the last one. Who needs to be in that position? And why isn't that person in the position? Why has she been in this position for (so many) years?

I think, my move here, has been to try and shift the group toward thinking about their political efficacy. The adult chaperone seems to read this and add on.

Adult chaperone: That's someone in charge of things that affects your guys lives without you guys knowing it. So, when you become aware of these things, these are things you can change. She wasn't able to answer--Sydney brought up a really good point about people touching you, people touching you in unsafe ways, and you're just like 'alright this is just what it is and I'm just going to get up at it in my own way'... she didn't know how to answer that at all and that shows how disconnected she is.

Me: Yeah, you asked a great question, you said 'do you know what it's like for a girl in my neighborhood.

There is some really important additional context here. The abridged version is that Sydney shares her experience being inappropriately touched and getting sort of used to it because of the high frequency of the experience. The interviewee says she is sorry to hear this and suggests some of the initiatives and programs her department is supporting might help girls and boys be in a different way with one another in the future. Sydney presses how this is happening when kids are really young and the interviewee kind of misses her and this part of the dialogue ends when she responds with a statement about it being a natural part of being a teenager.

Me: I don't think she heard what you were saying.
Sydney: She didn't understand what I was saying because she don't know what it's like.
Me: Right, so what's the take away? She doesn't understand?
Sydney: Because it's hard to help someone you don't really know about—you don't really know how to help them.

For me this thread comes up a lot, especially in Sydney's reflections, I am reading it as the notion that knowledge comes from experience. I make another move to shift our thinking about toward opportunities for political efficacy.

Me: So who would you want to see in that position or who ought to be in a position like that?
Sydney: Someone whose actually experienced stuff like that, who grew up in our neighborhood, or who is actually involved and knows how to speak to us.

Another young man chimes in with an important observation.

Ms. Tracy, she was probably talking like that because she thought she had way more power than us and was like they can't do anything.

This awareness of the power dynamics at work is important. The young people are teaching me about critical consciousness.

> *Me: Something else that stood out to me, was someone asked, 'did you always want to do this job? And how did you get this job?' and she just said, 'oh I kind of just fell into this experience,' how do you fall into a job like that? You have to know important people. To me, the whole thing, speaks to…*
>
> *Sydney: I don't even think it's because she's white I think it's like it was something she didn't really want to do but she ended up doing probably because of the pay. But I feel like she doesn't really want to do it*

Sydney goes on to contrast the public official to our community organization's Executive Director and the ED's orientation to the work she does and the way she engages with youth.

> *Me: What would it have looked like if she was passionate?*
>
> *Madison: She would've heard what we said.*
>
> *Sydney: She would've worded things better because she would've understood that we were going to take that offensively. She would've like talked about more stuff that connected with us. She would never have put a bike store in our neighborhood when she could have been doing a lot more stuff than a bike store.*
>
> *Elijah: She shouldn't have made the windows comment.*
>
> *Sydney: That windows thing wasn't cool.*
>
> *Me: Yeah.*
>
> (Group Discussion Post -7/26/17- Interview, 7/31/17, 29:00-1:12:00)

Critical consciousness is taking shape, everywhere, all the time—the phenomenon exists and is changing through time with and without our attention. This source of post-intentional phenomenological material provokes in subtle and obvious ways, with varying amplitude. In this excerpt, there are several moments that have I read as high amplitude, these moments have a gravitas to them. These are moments that evoked a

visceral response in me as I listened to the audio records. Succinctly, those moments are captured below:

> *#1: Sydney: "...like she was talking down on us."*
>
> *#2: Sydney: "I feel like when we came there, she thought we was going to do one thing but when we got there and actually started asking questions she didn't think those questions were going to come up from us."*
>
> *#3: Xavier: "that lady was racist"*
>
> *#4: Adult chaperone: "That's someone in charge of things that affects your guys lives without you guys knowing it. So when you become aware of these things, these are things you can change. She wasn't able to answer--Sydney brought up a really good point about people touching you, people touching you in unsafe ways, and you're just like 'alright this is just what it is and I'm just going to get up at it in my own way'... she didn't know how to answer that at all and that shows how disconnected she is."*
> *Sydney: "She didn't understand what I was saying because she don't know what it's like."*
> *Sydney: "Because it's hard to help someone you don't really know about—you don't really know how to help them."*

In the first moment, Sydney expresses she felt like she was being talked down to and when it comes down to it, there were a lot of things leading toward her conclusion—her interpretation of the experience. The interviewee is an individual in a high-ranking public position whose job is to address health in our community. There are power dynamics running through the space and exchanges occurring. We are a group of mostly Black teenagers from a historically marginalized neighborhood in the city. When the interviewee makes a move to name her positionality (worth noting that she doesn't name her whiteness) and the privileges she afforded within the context of our racist, classist, patriarchal society it is a miss for the young people listening. Rather than reading her decision to name positionality and privileges as an honoring of what she does and does not understand and is working to understand, many of the young people (as evidenced by

the nodding when Sydney names it) experience this as a decision to distance herself apart from them. The interviewee shares about living and having access to surrounding lakes and feeling safe to walk anytime day or night. In what the young people have decided is a move to distance herself from the group she does the opposite of what I (as a white, middle class, woman) imagine is her intention. Through this distancing move one might read (and the young people do) her as deficit-minded, 'because you live where you do, you must not feel safe.' If this didn't turn the young people off from the get-go, there is another moment in which they are left feeling equally if not further discriminated against. Our group, and I include myself in this context, were deeply offended by her remarks related to the broken windows theory—though in different ways and with varying levels of harm.

"Broken Windows" theory of urban decline comes from Wilson and Kelling (1982). According to "broken windows" theory, small and relatively insignificant forms of public disorder contribute to acts of more serious crime and overall urban decay (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004). The theory posits that criminal offenders are attracted to physical locations where graffiti can be seen, where people are publicly intoxicated, where litter is strewn, and cars abandoned because they assume residents of these geographical locations are indifferent to what happens in the neighborhood (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004).

I read Xavier's remark, "that lady was racist," as a cumulative response to being in that space, as a young Black man, and enduring these classed and racialized exchanges. The dialogue happening in the debrief conversation is an important reminder that intentions and impact are often in conflict with one another. I believe my whiteness,

my middle-classness, and my gender shaped my perceptions of the interview experience, it was easy for me to see the interviewee (with whom I share these characteristics) as well-intentioned, albeit off in her delivery and ability to connect with young, mostly Black community members. The way I read and hear the young people express their perceptions of this same experience is different than my own. I hear, "she doesn't understand us," "she talked down on us," "she's racist," and ultimately this is what matters most—not the intentions of the interviewee, rather the impact of how the young people perceived the interviewee and their experience there.

Another moment I read as an amplified provocation occurred when Sydney expressed her perception that the interviewee "...didn't think those questions were going to come up from us." My immediate reaction is one in which Sydney is keenly aware of a tendency for adults to underestimate young people's intelligence, experience, and capacity to engage. Another reading is that Sydney is also aware of the historical pattern (and likely her own experiences) of white people dismissing Black, Indigenous, and people of color. She implicitly names the perceived difference in power by stating that her and her peers' questions "come up" to surprise the interviewee in her position of authority.

The fourth amplified provocation is a moment in which an adult chaperone who was present for the interview experience and debrief discussion recalls that Sydney shared a very personal experience of repeated sexual assault. Sydney asked the interviewee, "do you know what it's like, like for a girl living in (her neighborhood) and how boys treat you?" The interviewee responded that she didn't know and that it has been a long time since she was a little girl. She goes on to share that she learns about

what is going on from her staff who work more directly in the community, such as staff working in school clinics. Sydney goes on to provide more context, describing that sometimes at school or at the park, boys are touching girls and a common response is for the girls not to say anything—she adds, "it's like you brought up like that." Sydney shares more.

> cause when they touch you they don't even… you don't even care no more. It's like we used to it. Like, we care, but it's still like, oh, they just touch you, type stuff. It's not like I'm trying to report them. (7/26/17 Interview, 48:52-50:16)

The interviewee seems to be following responding with a comment about the wearing away of one's reaction when something happens repeatedly. Sydney affirms the interviewee responding, "Yeah, 'cause it happens so much you don't care no more." The interviewee says, "I hear you," and then connects what Sydney has shared to some initiatives her office is implementing to try and address the experiences of young men and women in the community. The exchange does not strike me as disconnected until Sydney describes why she feels young people might have guards up, "It's cause...when we were young, when we were young like, we might, we have guards up a lot because of stuff already happening to us when we were young." The interviewee responds, "Yeah. And it's a natural part of being a teenager, too." With that, this part of the dialogue ends and the next question is asked.

> When Sydney is reminded of this exchange, she expresses frustration.
> *Sydney: "She didn't understand what I was saying because she don't know what it's like."*
> *Sydney: "Because it's hard to help someone you don't really know about—you don't really know how to help them."*

There is something to learn here. There is an ontological and epistemological assumption running through Sydney's articulation. Sydney believes that knowing comes from

experience. Sydney stresses that the interviewee is disconnected from her and her community because she has never lived there and does not share critical experiences of community members. This desire to learn from people who do know is not enough. In Sydney's mind, you cannot know how to help if you do not know what it is like.

Ladson-Billings' reflects that a consistent barrier for adults aiming to cultivate critical consciousness in young people is a failure to do the work of cultivating their own critical consciousness. While the interviewee may be an expert on health and barriers to health and well-being, she struggled to connect with the young people during this experience. The young people are left grappling with important questions, "what did she mean when she talked about broken windows theory? What characteristics and experiences do people need to have in order to be able to do their jobs well? Who has power here, why?" Regardless of whether an experience is positive or negative, the phenomenon is at work and important things are happening.

For the last source of phenomenological material, rather than zooming in on an amplified provocation of a specific moment, I am thinking of this story and its cumulative impact on our summer experience.

PIP Material Source #4

Elijah shined all summer long. He was a leader in this space. He showed up consistently, made us laugh, taught us, and surprised us. On his own time, he created and shared an animated video of his summer experience with us. He took a lead role in our community presentation during the final week.

At the beginning of the summer, when setting our group norms, we talked about how as young people participating in this type of research, we don't have to go anywhere to look up information, we're not going to be getting on the computer or going into

books, because we are the experts on our own lives and experiences. We talked about how our stories hold everything we need and we just have to decide what it is about them that we want and need to share, to figure out how to share them, and with whom. We talked about the importance of speaking our truths, using I-statements, and the importance of confidentiality—not sharing other people's information without permission and keeping private things people wish to share but don't want to leave the room. I think this positioning of youth as experts of their own lives and experiences and group norming process may have created an opening for something Elijah decided to take action on in the coming weeks.

There was a moment during our second week in which Elijah was being provoked by the group, really one person in particular. He suddenly got really upset, he left the room frustrated, and no one really understood why it escalated so quickly.

Another thing I was doing throughout the summer was calling caregivers. I made weekly phone calls to update them on our research project and share positive sentiments around their children's contributions. After this outburst, I called Elijah's mom. She expressed shock and joy when Elijah came home and expressed a desire to do some sort of presentation for the group, to teach his peers and I about autism so that he might have a different experience than he is used to. He expressed a hope that he would be better understood if kids had more information about why he sometimes responds in ways they find funny or confusing. She reiterated that this was so surprising to her because her son, a rising 9th grader, had always experienced difficulties, especially in school, but never before expressed a desire to teach others about autism. When we ended our phone call, she was excited to work with him on preparing some materials for a discussion we would make space for the following week. I let her know I'd follow up to share how it went.

> *Me: "Ok so I um had a conversation with Elijah last week and we talked a little bit about him talking to the group about autism. So he's going to kind of present a little about Autism to all of us and then he'll take some questions.*
>
> *Jada: "What got you so hooked on autism?"*

Elijah: "Because I have autism."

Jada: "Yeah?"

Elijah: "Yes."

Me: "So, he's, him and his mother created—prepared—an informational packet for you, does everyone have one of these?"

Tiana: "Yes mam"

Me: "So Elijah, what's the best way, do you want to walk us through this, what are you thinking?"

Elijah walks us through a four-page informational packet he and his mother put together in preparation for his talk. He discusses definitions, different types of autism spectrum disorders, specific challenges individuals with autism may experience such as difficulty communicating, difficulty interacting socially, sensitivities to sensory stimulation, as well as a description of behaviors that are associated with individuals with autism. He describes that doctors don't really know what causes autism but that it's increasingly prevalent and that research interests are high. After Elijah finishes his formal presentation, I am curious about what the group already knew and what might be new information.

Me: "Have you all heard of autism spectrum disorder before?"

Jada: "Yeah."

Me: "Are there any questions you have?"

Jada shares that she's learned kids with autism have larger and smarter brains than most kids and she is curious about why this knowledge doesn't seem to fit with her experiences of her peers with autism in school contexts.

Jada: "I heard that autism kids actually have like a smarter brain then you know people without autism but why is it…it seems that kids with autism are smarter than kids without it but they get put in lower grades or in the special classes, why are they in there if they have smarter brains than us?"

Elijah responds to Jada by describing a challenge he faces around socializing, that he is often read as easily offended or over-reactive and that this can contribute toward feelings of social isolation or ostracism from peers. He suggests that sometimes kids with autism need people that understand this so they are less likely to be teased and can focus. He assures Jada they learn the same things, but often in a different room with a different teacher.

> *Elijah: "Because, you know, kids with regular brain and autistic kids have bigger brains. But do remember, they can be easily offended or easily react, and normal kids sometimes make fun of them for how they act so and some of them get treated, some may need to be treated specially."*
>
> *Jada: "So do you guys learn the same things that the normal kids do?"*
>
> *"Elijah: "Yeah, we do. We just do it in a different room with a different teacher."*

I hope that the group understands why Elijah feels it is important to share this information with them, so I prompt Elijah.

> *Me: "So can you tell us a little bit about why you wanted to share this information with our group?"*
>
> *Elijah: "The reason I wanted to share this is because um because I have autism and you guys didn't know that until now. Remember last week, when I walked out of the room? Like I was, trying to keep it inside me but I just had to walk out and like usually I try to, I don't know why but like try to overcome it and I need to work this out better than last time. Last time, when I was young, I keep disrupting and throwing chairs and stuff and this time I'm trying to be a little calmer."*

Elijah reminds the group of the moment he left the room the week before. He describes how frustrating it can be for him to control his emotions when he's upset. He suggests that this has been an issue for him in the past and that in the past, his responses were sometimes more aggressive but that he's working on responding in a calm way. I want us to be aware of the ways we may contribute to him feeling frustrated. I want to avoid him feeling isolated, targeted, or upset.

> *Me: "What are some things that we can do as a group to help?"*

Jada: "Yeah, because I didn't even know why you stormed out."

Elijah: "Oh, like, I'm not trying to point any fingers or make you guys mad or anything, but sometimes when I act, act like, trying to crack jokes and stuff, you might, I might have offended you, and I didn't know that but, you guys just want to yell at me and the truth is you don't really have to do that every single time. Like if you get like a little offended just stay in your normal state but at least I ain't got to keep doing it over and over and over again, I just did it once (referring to cracking a joke). Sometimes you guys, some people, just keep yelling at me 'boy, you're doing too much,' that basically offended me. Because if someone did it just once and you just yell at them, basically it's like you're not trying to snap off but you did without thinking and people think outside the box instead of thinking before they do. I sometimes cannot take the criticism, sometimes it's hard to take it but you know, life goes, and sometimes people just don't want to hear people getting yelled at for doing a small mistake.

When Elijah shares how he experienced that moment leading up to him leaving the room, the group is listening. Tiana reflects on what she did or didn't do in that moment and offers an apology. Jada also apologizes. Several young people listen and nod.

Tiana: "I'm sorry you felt that way, if I offended you in any way, I am so sorry."

Elijah: "That's ok."

Jada: "Me too."

I want to acknowledge Elijah, I'm bursting with pride. I am filled with gratitude for his willingness to share his experiences and his desire to help us learn so we can be in a better way with one another.

Me: "Thank you so much, Elijah, for being willing to share with us so that we can be considerate of sensitivities and be more intentional in how we treat you."

Elijah provides more context and shares more about the decisions he makes and his previous educational experiences, illuminating why teaching us about autism is important to him.

Elijah: "I get treated like a normal child, as an example, look at where I'm at right now. Just because you have this doesn't mean you have to get treated like

completely differently. Like, this world is still the same, except like, like my parents never abused me, they just treat me like a normal child."

Jada: "Because there is nothing wrong with you"

Elijah: "Yeah, there's nothing wrong. And sometimes, I might use autism as an excuse, but basically, I'm saying it's trying to take over my life and the truth is its been in my life. Because, um I try not to interact with no one. I'm kind of antisocial and I always sit at the table by myself, I didn't—basically I'm saying I choose to sit at the table by myself so I won't cause any problems because the truth is when I interact with someone, like socially all the time…

Jada: "Do you get bullied?"

Elijah: "Yeah. For example, in 5th grade I was bullied so hard. Like I was getting bullied and the teacher thinks that I'm just crazy, but the truth is I got autism and the kids were bullying me. In fact, I was minding my own business just doing my work while the bad kids were throwing tables and stuff or papers and pencils and I was in 5th grade and the teacher comes to say, 'who all started this?' and they all blamed me. Like, no, I didn't do it. But no, blame the kid who was doing their work, like all the time. And the kids who was not doing it—they were just minding their own business, just continue doing their work, they were kind of like being a bystander, but the truth is I would do the same thing too in that situation. Because like the last time, when you guys play fight, I know it's playfight, but the teacher did say no horse play. So if I say like 'keep your hands to yourself' I might say it in a joking way but kind of being serious because I don't want you guys to fight and yeah, like I don't really want you guys to start a fight and start a whole riot. And I don't like when someone, and like I said, I'm not going to point any fingers, but I don't like getting told what to do, like only at me—not at anyone else. If everyone is doing something, and I do it once, and everyone wants to accuse me while ignoring everyone else. This is an example of me being such a horrible volunteer, because when I say something everyone will get mad at me but when someone says something to me, and it is true I shouldn't be doing it then I would just stop. So that's why I try not to talk to nobody or try and help because I will always get yelled at and how is this all affected by autism? Well, sometimes, I do try to be like a regular kid but I ended up getting that for no reason and every keep on calling me a 'stan' like because I get mad easily, but the truth is I don't want, I got autism, I don't want you to keep saying it over and over and over again. Autism is used as an insult and I don't want you to do that. And I know that some of you guys trying to help me to make new friends, interact with society, but the truth is when I interact with society I always, always, get into problems."

Me: "So we really want you to feel successful and a part of our group. Will you continue to let us know when you're feeling like we could be doing things better?"

> *Elijah: "Yeah. And can I ask you guys something? Please don't treat me special since I got autism. Just when I make a mistake, don't just yell, just tell me 'can you please stop?' Don't just keep telling me to calm down, over and over again. When I'm feeling happy, I crack jokes and this and that. Just treat me like the way you treat each other just accept the fact just don't yell out, yelling doesn't always solve the problem, being nice solves the problem too."*
>
> *Me: "Thank you so much Elijah."*
>
> (Day 10 Discussion, 7/10/17, 10:47-29:50)

This is the story that comes to mind first when I reflect on the summer of 2017 YPAR project. Elijah's decision to teach us about autism completely changed the way the group was able to be with one another. He provided an exemplary model of what is possible when youth are positioned as experts with valuable knowledge and experience that is worth listening to and learning from. Elijah recognized a pattern of being ostracized by young people and adults in school settings. He found himself frustrated beyond his control when he had to storm out of the room. This was a pivotal moment for us. If Elijah had not done what he did in response to this experience, I am certain we would have had a different summer experience. Elijah decided enough was enough. I read Elijah as having asked himself what his peers and I needed to know in order for him to feel like a valuable, important, respected member of the research team. He realized that there was an opportunity present. He could continue to sit by himself and avoid social interactions like he shared he often depended on as a coping mechanism or he could try something different. He knew that he was an expert on autism, and he knew he had the power to change his experience. Elijah went home and asked his mom to help him put together a talk about autism for our group. I'll never forget the shock and pride his mom expressed over Elijah's agency that summer. When he presented to our group, he brilliantly articulated how he is both similar and different from his peers as well as what

he needed from us as we built relationships and endeavored on this research experience with one another. He changed the way we interacted with him and one another, we were more intentional. He taught us to care for one another in a new way. Not only did he give us the gift of learning from him, he created a space for himself to thrive, and thrive he did. Elijah was one of the most active participants in our group. He played an integral role at each stage of the project and especially in the final community presentation.

Summary

In this chapter, I ushered you into four sources of phenomenological material that illuminate moments in which the phenomenon was at work, moments in which critical consciousness was provoked, taking shape for young people throughout the six-week summer research project experience and for myself. I offered additional context and important ideas emerging through investigating the phenomenon. Through exploring the sources of phenomenological material, we have grappled with important considerations, possibilities, and insights for how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research. I aimed to acknowledge, bring forth, and elevate the immense capacity of young people to *do* important work and *be* agentic participants in their own lives and within our society.

Chapter 5

A Neuroscientific Understanding of Mind and Body

In this chapter, I spend time teaching about the mind and body from a neuroscience perspective. This information will be important in preparing to read the productions of critical consciousness taking shape that I share in chapter six.

I have understood myself to be a bodily-knower for a while now. I have often described knowing things in my body before knowing them intellectually, before being able to articulate my understanding. I have also known that losing my brother has fundamentally changed the way I navigate the world and the way I understand myself. For about a year following my brother's passing, I had to entirely recalibrate what it meant for me to be a participant in my life. I thought that meant putting my work, this work, on hold. Little did I know, that this work was never really on hold, but manifesting in work that was not merely writing. Big successes during this period came from small moments like getting out of bed and making the bed so I would be less likely to crawl back in later. Big successes came from small moments like showing up in places I was responsible for being at, although often unable to be present in the ways I previously felt I could. Big successes came in small moments like the first time I found myself laughing again, even though I also felt immense sadness upon recognizing that moment had come. Big successes came in small moments, in the little actions I could take to show I cared for and love my partner. Big successes came in small moments like making it to my yoga class and allowing myself to cry at the end of my practice. During that time, my body and mind were recalibrating and healing. I didn't have the words to articulate what and how I was feeling and why my dissertation work was important. I was getting through each day,

moment by moment, one day at a time. That was the work I did in 2017-2018 that I feel made space for me to do this work, now.

When my brother passed away tragically and unexpectedly in the fall of 2017, he was working at the University of Miami in the Miller School of Medicine. More specifically, he was at the Center for Therapeutic Innovation, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Prior to his work in Miami, he earned his Ph.D. in the department of pharmacology and toxicology at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine. Before earning his doctorate, he worked at Merck & Co. Inc. Research Laboratories in Neuroscience Drug Discovery in the Departments of Pain/Migraine and Central Pharmacology. My brother graduated with a BS in neuroscience and MS in molecular biology. I often struggled to understand my brother's scientific work but it became increasingly important for me to explore as I worked toward earning my own Ph.D. I have felt a strong desire to apply a neuroscience lens when examining my post-intentional phenomenological materials and in exploring the brain and body from a neuroscience perspective, my critical consciousness shifted and swelled in new and important ways. In reading the provocations with this lens, I found myself increasingly motivated and excited by what I was learning and making incredulous connections to critical consciousness, human agency, and the immeasurable importance of human connectedness (the power of relationships and community).

In this chapter I share with you what I have learned, from a neuroscience perspective, about the mind, body, and trauma. In Chapter six, I illustrate how this neuroscientific reading can provide another lens for examining my experiences, post-reflexion journal entries, and understanding of my own critical consciousness taking

shape. I show how this neuroscientific reading shapes the lens through which I examine the second, third, and fourth sources of post-intentional phenomenological material. I describe the openings and possibilities for using a neuroscience frame for examining the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research.

The Body Keeps the Score

Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., is the founder and medical director of the Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts, he is a professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine and director of the National Complex Trauma Treatment Network (*The Body Keeps the Score*, 2014). His book, *The Body Keeps the Score,* provides new knowledge for understanding the causes and impact of trauma, offering solutions to people who have been touched by such forces. He describes how trauma reshapes our mind and body and suggests ways in which we might reclaim our minds, bodies, and lives once they have been impacted.

Historical context from the field (Psychiatry, Psychology, Neuroscience)

In the 1960s, van der Kolk was an attendant on a research ward in charge of organizing recreational activities for patients in a psychiatric health center. The goal of the research taking place in the ward was to determine whether psychotherapy or medication was best for treating young people who were diagnosed with schizophrenia (2014). At the time, the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis and 'the talking cure' was the most commonly used treatment for mental illness in the ward. van der Kolk's position afforded him tremendous time with individuals, many more hours (and experiences) with these individuals than what doctors could witness during their brief interactions. In many

ways this experience contributed to van der Kolk's resistance to the medical model of treatment (that drugs could be developed and prescribed to treat serious mental conditions).

After this experience, van der Kolk resumed medical school and as a new M.D. returned to the same institution to be trained as a psychiatrist. He and his colleagues spent six hours a day with their patients and then met with senior psychiatrists to share observations and ask questions. van der Kolk reflects that he learned—from a great teacher of his, a lesson he has held tight to.

> ...most human suffering is related to love and loss and that the job of therapists is to help people 'acknowledge, experience, and bear' the reality of life—with all its pleasures and heartbreak. 'The greatest sources of our suffering are the lies we tell ourselves' (2014, p. 26).

His teacher would say that, "people could never get better without knowing what they know and feeling what they feel" (p. 27). This learning was in juxtaposition with the trends of the psychiatric field at the time. In 1968, the *American Journal of Psychiatry* published results of the study from the ward where van der Kolk was an attendant. The results showed, unequivocally, "that schizophrenic patients who received drugs alone had a better outcome than those who talked three times a week with the best therapists in Boston" (p. 27). This marked one of many studies contributing toward a shift in how medicine and psychiatry approached psychological problems. For a time, the fields approached psychological problems as "infinitely variable expressions of intolerable feelings and relationships," but a brain-disease model of disorders began to emerge (p. 27).

van der Kolk initially embraced pharmacological interventions and may have even been the first psychiatrist in Boston to administer lithium to treat manic-depression.

He was part of the first research team to test antipsychotic drugs on chronic patients confined to insane asylums. He acknowledges that at times the responses were nothing short of miraculous and that this approach led to the freeing of many people confined to mental institutions up until this period. However, he is critically aware of how relieved he and many other psychiatrists were to be seen as 'real scientists' stating,

> real scientists, just like their med school classmates who had laboratories, animal experiments, expensive equipment, and complicated diagnostic tests, and set aside the wooly-headed theories of philosophers like Freud and Jung (p. 27).

He recalls how one major psychiatry textbook "went so far as to state: 'the cause of mental illness is now considered an aberration of the brain, a chemical imbalance'" (p. 27). As time progressed, so did science and research.

Scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) started developing ways to isolate and measure hormones and neurotransmitters in blood and the brain. The chemical messengers that carry information from neuron to neuron, enabling us to engage effectively in our worlds are called neurotransmitters (2014). Abnormal levels of norepinephrine were associated with depression and abnormal levels of dopamine were associated with schizophrenia; with these findings came a hope that scientists would be able to develop drugs to target specific brain abnormalities. This hope led to another profound shift in the profession, the introduction of the American Psychiatric Association's DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*).

The DSM was the first system to diagnose psychiatric problems, which was important for scientists who needed a precise and systematic way to communicate their findings. However, the DSM was never intended to be used for "forensic or insurance purposes" because it was an explicitly imprecise diagnostic system. Despite this caution,

it did not take long for pharmacology to revolutionize psychiatry and van der Kolk argues, "the drug revolution that started out with so much promise may in the end have done as much harm as good" (p. 36). While he agrees that medications can be very helpful in addressing patient needs, he also believes that medications, such as SSRIs, "should only be considered adjuncts in the overall treatment" (p. 36). He goes on to describe important shortcomings of a brain-disease model which he argues overlook four fundamental truths:

> The brain-disease model overlooks four fundamental truths: (1) our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being; (2) language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common sense of meaning; (3) we have the ability to regulate our own physiology, including some of the so-called involuntary functions of the body and brain, through such basic activities as breathing, moving, and touching; and (4) we can change social conditions to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive (p. 38).

If we agree with van der Kolk's four truths, then we believe we have the power to both destroy and heal ourselves and one another, and that restoring well-being has everything to do with restoring relationship and community; We believe that we have the power to change ourselves and others by sharing our experiences, helping us to understand what we know and the meaning it carries; We believe that we have the ability to self-regulate through breathing, movement and touch; And we believe that we can change social conditions to create environments in which all people can feel safe and thrive. Let us explore the scientific progression that lead van der Kolk to these findings.

A Neuroscience Revolution: Brain Imaging

In the early 1990s technology was evolving and scientists began to use brain-imaging to gain sophisticated understandings of how the brain processes information.

First through PET (Positron Emission Tomography) and then through fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) scientists were able to visualize different parts of the brain that were activated when people engaged in certain activities or remembered events from their past. As scientists began to observe the brain as it processed memories, sensations, and emotions, they started to map the circuits of mind and consciousness. Neuroimaging transformed the understanding of trauma (2014).

Harvard Medical School has been at the center of the neuroscience revolution and in 1994 van der Kolk—who had been studying how trauma is remembered—was invited to conduct research with the first director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Neuroimaging Laboratory, Scott Rauch (2014). Van der Kolk and his research assistant, Rita Fisler, invited eight individuals who had intensely traumatic experiences and occurrences of flashbacks to be part of a study in which they would lie in fMRI scanner while listening to a recreation of their scene, from a narrative the participant was supported to provide. Surprisingly, all eight agreed and were hopeful that the study would yield important findings that might help others who are also suffering from the occurrences of traumatic flashbacks. When the participants underwent the procedure a few expected and surprising results were discovered.

As expected, the biggest area of brain activation occurred in the limbic area of the brain (the area often referred to as our emotional brain). Research had already shown that intense emotions activate the limbic system in an area called the amygdala. The amygdala cautions us of impending danger and activates our body's stress response.

What came as a greater surprise, was the discovery of brain deactivation in the Broca's area of the brain, located in the left frontal lobe of the cortex. The Broca's area is

one of the speech centers of the brain and when it is not functioning people struggle to put thoughts and feelings into words (2014). The brain scans of all eight research participants showed that the Broca's area of the brain went offline whenever the participants were reliving a flashback. Even years after traumatic events occurred, the participant's bodies re-experienced the intense emotions, their fight or flight responses were ignited, and they found it virtually impossible to articulate their feelings. More succinctly stated, "trauma by nature drives us to the edge of comprehension, cutting us off from the language based on common experience or an imaginable past" (p. 43). van der Kolk explains that many people eventually learn a 'cover story,' one that offers an explanation for their symptoms and behavior for other people—yet these stories "rarely capture the inner truth of experience" because traumatic experiences are exceptionally challenging to organize into a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end (p. 43). This is important because this, in part, describes why flashbacks occur.

An area of the brain called Brodmann's area 19 was also activated in the research participants. This part of the brain is located in the visual cortex and registers images when they first enter the brain. It was surprising to see this area of the brain activate after as much time had passed between the scan and the traumatic event (in one case 13 years earlier). Typically, images that are registered in area 19 disperse to other areas of the brain that interpret meaning—yet the scans showed that area 19 was activated as if the trauma were actually occurring in real time.

The scans also revealed that while the participants experienced flashbacks, the right side of the brain was active, and the left side remained inactive. A deactivation of the left-brain hemisphere has a direct impact one's capacity to organize experiences into

logical sequences and to translate one's ability to translate feelings and perceptions into language (2014). This loss of executive functioning occurs when people who have experienced trauma are triggered into a flashback.

In addition to brain scans, physiological symptoms were also recorded with heart rate and blood pressure monitors. An increased heart rate and blood pressure reading was observed when participants were read the descriptions of their trauma. When our fight or flight response is activated, the hormone adrenaline is released. For people who have not experienced trauma, these hormones dissipate and return to normal relatively quickly once the threat is no longer observed. But for people who have experienced trauma, their bodies' stress hormones "spike quickly and disproportionately" and take much longer to return to normal (p. 46). Consistently elevated stress hormones have profound effects on people's memory and attention, irritability, and sleep and contribute to multiple long-term health issues.

Newer research has revealed what fMRI scans could not show at the time: some people respond to threat by shutting down, in these cases the body registers a threat, but the conscious mind goes offline as if nothing is happening. While their minds have learned to ignore threat stimulus, their emotional brain keeps working—which activates the release of stress hormones. This has a profound effect on our health and well-being.

> The physical effects on the organs go on unabated until they demand notice when they are expressed as illness. Medications, drugs, and alcohol can also temporarily dull or obliterate unbearable sensations and feelings. But the body continues to keep the score (p. 46).

For hundreds of years before this research, the fields of psychology and psychotherapy relied heavily on methods of talking through distressed feelings as a

means to resolve them. This research teaches us that this method is inadequate due to the physiological responses that occur in the brains of people who have experienced trauma.

Anatomy of the Brain

As we draw on neuroscience to learn more about the brain, it becomes even more apparent that the brain is comprised of interconnected parts, working in sync to help humans to not only survive, but also thrive. An understanding of the brain's anatomy and how these parts work together is important for understanding how trauma impacts every aspect of our human organism. This understanding can offer an essential guide for effectively addressing the stress trauma induces.

The brain is responsible for ensuring our survival, regardless of the conditions it endures. In order to ensure survival, the brain needs to do five critical things.

> (1) generate internal signals that register what our bodies need, such as food, rest, protections, sex, and shelter; (2) create a map of the world to point us where to go to satisfy those needs; (3) generate the necessary energy and actions to get us there; (4) warn us of dangers and opportunities along the way; and (5) adjust our actions based on the requirements of the moment. And since we human beings are mammals, creatures that can only survive and thrive in groups, all of these imperatives require coordination and collaboration (p. 55).

Mental health issues can occur when internal signals that register what our bodies need are not working, when our maps lead us astray, when we cannot rely on our bodies to move, when our bodies and choices are not aligned with our needs, and when our relationships with our self and others breaks down. Each structure of the brain plays an integral role in these functions and the experience of trauma can interfere with all of them.

The Rational Brain

Our cognitive brain makes up about 30% of the area inside our skull and is primarily concerned with the world that surrounds us, "understanding how things and people work and figuring out how to accomplish our goals, manage our time, and sequence our actions" (p. 55). Below the rational brain are two parts of our brain that are responsible for (1) registering and managing our body's physiology and (2) identifying "comfort, safety, threat, hunger, fatigue, desire, longing, excitement, pleasure, and pain" (p.55). Our brain begins developing in the womb, layer by layer.

The Reptilian Brain

The part of our brain that is active when we are born is our ancient animal brain, referred to commonly as the 'reptilian brain.' If you trace your finger up your spine, to the spot where your spinal cord reaches your skull, you can approximate where the reptilian brain is located within the brain stem. Imagine a newborn. A baby cries, eats, sleeps, breathes, feels temperature, hunger, wetness, and pain. The brainstem and the hypothalamus (located right above it) work together to control the body's energy levels. The brainstem and the hypothalamus help the heart, lungs, endocrine system, and the immune system function—which are fundamental to maintaining a mostly stable internal balance. When an individual experiences trauma, for example, if a child is starving, they are likely to experience physiological problems and effective treatment requires addressing these fundamental functions of the body.

The Mammalian Brain

Above the reptilian brain is the mammalian brain, our limbic system. This part of our brain is developed after we are born and is largely responsible for our emotions, our

ability to assess danger, our judgments of pleasure and fear, and our differentiator when determining what is or is not important to our survival. This part of our brain is developed through experiences, along with our genetic makeup and "inborn temperament" (p. 56). As we accumulate experiences, we begin to form default responses, this is because this part of the brain is formed in a "use-dependent manner" (p. 56). For example, if a child consistently perceives that it is safe and loved their brain is likely to specialize in activities such as exploration, play, and cooperation. When a child repeatedly perceives feeling scared or feeling unwanted, their brain is likely becoming specialized in managing feelings of fear and abandonment. While these limbic structures are formed through early experiences, they are susceptible to alteration later in life as we accumulate experiences of love, loss, violence, etc.

The Emotional Brain

In van der Kolk's work, he refers to the reptilian brain and the mammalian brain together as the "emotional brain." This is because these two parts make up the core of our central nervous system. The primary objective for the nervous system is to ensure your well-being. It does this by sending the body signals through the release of hormones. The sensations these hormones elicit play an important role in the decisions we make over the course of a lifetime. These visceral sensations may manifest as a 'gut feeling,' or a tightness in your chest and they influence things like what we do for pleasure, our taste in food and music, our hobbies, who we are attracted to and prefer to avoid. van der Kolk explains that our emotional brain's cellular organization and biochemistry are simpler than those of the rational brain and because of that, its response is based on rough similarities, initiating preprogrammed fight or flight responses.

> These muscular and physiological reactions are automatic, set in motion without any thought or planning on our part, leaving our conscious, rational capacities to catch up later, often well after the threat is over (p. 57).

The Neocortex

The neocortex is the top layer of our brain and ours is much thicker than our mammal counterparts. Early in life the frontal lobes that make up the majority of the neocortex undergo rapid development. The frontal lobes are responsible for things like our ability to plan, reflect, imagine, play, and predict causes and effects of our decision making. The frontal lobes are critical for understanding trauma because this is where empathy lives. Without responsive and active frontal lobes, people are more likely to default to habits and their relationships tend to be more superficial and routine. As one learns to understand other people's intentions, they can adapt to stay safe among people who have different perceptions, beliefs, values, and expectations. The frontal lobes aid us in decision making and action taking, for example, I might find getting cozy under a weighted-blanket helps ease my anxiety when I'm feeling overwhelmed. Or I might experience cravings for sugary treats, but I am able to choose not to eat them every time I experience a craving. The impulse and what is considered socially acceptable behavior is an intersection in which many people experience trouble, "the more intense the visceral, sensory input from the emotional brain, the less capacity the rational brain has to put a damper on it" (p. 60).

The Thalamus

Our senses, sight, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling are processed inside the limbic system in area called the thalamus. The thalamus integrates our perceptions of these sensations into a more integrated and coherent experience, one in which we are able

to process what is happening. Upon being integrated in the thalamus, the sensations travel in two directions: (1) down deeper into the limbic brain to the amygdala and (2) up to the frontal lobes "where they reach our conscious awareness" (p. 60). The sensations travel in these two directions at different speeds, extremely quickly on the way to the amygdala and more slowly to the frontal lobes. Because of this difference in speed, the amygdala processes the information it gets from the thalamus faster than the frontal lobes—determining what is a threat to survival before we are consciously aware. The processing that occurs in the thalamus sometimes breaks down and the sensations become more isolated and dissociated fragments, interfering with normal memory processing. In such instances of break down, the perception of danger in the present moment can feel like it will go on forever.

The Amygdala

The amygdala is responsible for determining whether incoming information it receives is necessary for survival, this happens very quickly because it draws on additional information from the hippocampus. The hippocampus is a nearby structure in the brain that connects new information to previous experiences. When the amygdala senses danger it sends an instant message to the hypothalamus and brain stem. This initiates the stress hormone system the autonomic nervous system to activate a whole-body response. When the stress hormone system is activated, cortisol and adrenaline (the hormones responsible for increasing our heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate) prepare us for a fight or flight response. Our ability to return to our baseline state is impacted by the trauma we have or have not experienced. In people who have experienced trauma, there is an increased risk for misinterpreting whether a situation is

dangerous or not. In the earlier section about *the neocortex*, we learned that flexible and strong frontal lobes help us to gauge the intentions of other people and adapt our behavior. When the frontal lobes are less flexible, it is more likely we will misinterpret others' in our relationships, which can make adjusting to various contexts very difficult. In such instances when our frontal lobes are working less efficiently, it is difficult to control our emotions and impulses. To clarify, the amygdala detects threats to our survival and get our bodies ready for fight or flight, and it is not until the sensations get to our frontal lobes that we can assess and make conscious choices.

Our Stress Response

In order to effectively respond to stress, our body depends on a balance existing between the amygdala and the medial prefrontal cortex (where your frontal lobes are located). Our brain provides us with two options when regulating our emotions: (1) regulate from the top down or (2) regulate from the bottom up (p. 63). Understanding the difference between these two options is necessary for understanding and treating traumatic stress. The first option, regulating from the top down, involves strengthening the capacity of the medial prefrontal cortex to monitor bodily sensations—a mindfulness practice could support this option. The second option, regulating from the bottom up involves a recalibration of one's autonomic nervous system (originating in the brain stem). The autonomic nervous system can be accessed through breath, movement, or touch.

An Analogy for Understanding the Relationship Between the Rational Brain and Emotional Brain

Neuroscientist Pat MacLean compares the relationship between the rational brain and emotional brain to a relatively competent rider and a wild horse.

> As long as the weather is calm and the path is smooth, the rider can feel in excellent control. But unexpected sounds and threats from other animals can make the horse bolt, forcing the rider to hold on for dear life. Likewise, when people feel their survival is at stake or they are seized by rages, longings, fear, or sexual desires, they stop listening to the voice of reason and it makes little sense to argue with them. Whenever the limbic system decides that something is a question of life or death, the pathways between the frontal lobes and the limbic system become extremely tenuous (p. 64).

While it is common for psychologists to try and help by supporting people to use insight and understanding to manage their behavior, "neuroscience research shows that very few psychological problems are the result of defects in understanding," rather they originate in pressures from parts of the brain responsible for perception and attention (p. 64).

Dissociation

Earlier, when discussing *the Thalamus*, we learned that sometimes processing breaks down and sensations become isolated and fragmented, interfering with normal memory processing. This breakdown can lead to dissociation— "emotions, sounds, images, thoughts, and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own" (p. 66). The fragmented senses of memory make their way into the present moment and in such instances, people are likely to relive their trauma. When trauma is not resolved, our body's stress hormones continue secreting adrenaline and cortisol and emotional responses keep getting replayed, susceptible to even the most minor irritations. Reliving trauma can manifest as a flashback and flashbacks are particularly unruly because they can happen anytime, anywhere, whether we are awake or asleep. When

people experience flashbacks, a coping mechanism is to organize one's life around protecting oneself as an attempt to avoid the occurrence. For many people, they try to numb themselves (with the help of drugs or alcohol) or seek out adrenaline inducing behaviors as a means of trying to cultivate a sense of control. When trauma is replayed over and over, the stress hormones work to imprint those memories more deeply in our minds. The result is often a lessening of engagement in daily activities, a muting of joy, more difficulty concentrating, increased difficulty in feeling alive in the present moment, and increased feeling of being trapped in the past.

Asking a person that has experienced trauma to discuss their experiences can initiate different responses depending on the individual. Some people will be able to detect a physiological response and others will not, but the imaging and monitoring done in a lab consistently shows increased heart rate and the activation of stress hormones. An individual's reaction may be irrational, but it is largely outside of their control. For example, if I felt nothing when my brother passed away, I would have felt like something was terribly wrong with me. The experience can be jarring—and often results in a deep sense of shame. Most people are not in touch with the root cause of their emotions and therapy can be used as a method to cultivate awareness and build capacity for feeling and being in the present moment. However, "the threat-perception system of the brain has changed, and people's reactions are dictated by the imprint of the past" (p. 67). The challenge is not learning to accept what has happened to us rather it is to become aware and begin to recognize our internal sensations and emotions.

Body and Brain Connections

Darwin

We are familiar with Charles Darwin and the theories originating from his works *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) but Darwin also published *The Expression of Emotion* toward the end of his career in 1872. In this work, Darwin explored the foundations of emotional life, discussing physical commonalities among all mammals (animals and humans). In addition to the physical features we share with mammals, Darwin also observed the shared signs of emotion between humans and animals. Darwin understood emotions as emanating from biology—sources of motivation that initiate actions. Our physical expressions and movements communicate our mental state to those around us and provide signals to those we interact with as to how they should respond. Darwin observed that the "fundamental purpose of emotions is to initiate movement that will restore the organism to safety and physical equilibrium" (p. 75). Before PTSD was named Darwin was theorizing this observation that van der Kolk summarizes for us.

> If an organism is stuck in survival mode, its energies are focused on fighting off unseen enemies, which leaves no room for nurture, care, and love. For us humans, it means that as long as the mind is defending itself against invisible assaults, our closest bond are threatened, along with our ability to imagine, plan, play, learn, and pay attention to other people's needs (p. 76).

In addition, Darwin theorized body and brain connections writing about how the heart, gut, and brain communicate via the 'pneumogastric' nerve, "the critical nerve involved in the expression and management of emotions in both humans and animals" (p. 76). van der Kolk reflects on his excitement reading Darwin's work.

> Of course we experience our most devastating emotions as gut-wrenching feelings and heartbreak. As long as we register emotions primarily in our heads, we can

> remain pretty much in control, but feeling as if our chest is caving in or we've been punched in the gut is unbearable (p. 76).

He goes on to describe the common behavior humans engage in like clinging to a partner, relying on drugs or alcohol, or cutting oneself as a means to alleviate these intense visceral sensations.

van der Kolk synthesizes that if Darwin was correct, responding to trauma requires that we help people develop an awareness of the interior sensations and begin to alter the processing of those sensations in our bodies. van der Kolk identifies the tendency for western society to separate the science of mind and body and points out that many traditional healing practices in other parts of the world have always held the communication between mind and body as central. I draw parallels between this conception of mind and body to Vagle's (2018) philosophizing and post-structural commitments. Vagle also recognizes the tendency for Western society to "either-or" thinking and instead asks us to understand the multiplicities of knowledge and holding ideas and understanding in tension with one another, through a process of "and-ing."

The Nervous System

There are two branches of the autonomic nervous system: (1) the sympathetic and (2) the parasympathetic. Together, these two branches manage our body's energy. The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) controls arousal, activating our fight or flight responses. It does this by moving blood to our muscles and triggering our adrenal gland to release adrenaline, which increases heart rate and blood pressure. The parasympathetic nervous system helps the body digest and recover from injuries. It releases acetylcholine, which slows down arousal, helps to relax our muscles and return our breathing to baseline. van der Kolk describes a simple way to experience these two systems.

> Whenever you take a deep breath, you activate the SNS. The resulting burst of adrenaline speeds up your heart, which explains why athletes take a few short, deep breaths before starting competition. Exhaling, in turn, activates the PNS, which slows down the heart. If you take yoga or a meditation class, your instructor will probably urge you to pay particular attention to exhalation, since deep, long breaths out help calm you down (p. 77).

Polyvagal Theory

Stephen Porges (1994) introduced Polyvagal Theory, building on Darwin's observations and insights related to the 'pneumogastric nerve.' "*Polyvagal* refers to the many branches of the vagus nerve, which connects numerous organs, including the brain, lungs, heart, stomach and intestines" (p. 78). The Polyvagal Theory describes the connection between the "visceral experiences of our bodies and the voices and faces of people around us," helping us to understand why a smile or soft tone of voice can alter the way we feel, why feeling seen and heard by people in our lives can make us feel safe, and why being dismissed can negatively impact our interactions with others (p. 78). Porges' theory is important because it helped foreground social relationships as central to our understanding of trauma, helping us to look beyond the effects of fight and flight.

One of the most important aspects for our mental health is our sense of safety. Porges described the capacity to evaluate danger and safety in one's environment as 'neuroception,' in practice, when people attempt to help those with faulty neuroception, it is important to find ways to support the resetting of their physiology. This is important because people need to be able to both respond to danger *and* "recover their capacity to experience safety, relaxation and true reciprocity" (p. 80). The visceral feeling of safety is critical for our physiology. Our ability to connect with others is critical for living meaningful and fulfilling lives. van der Kolk differentiates between having social support and being in the presence of others, "the critical issue is reciprocity: being truly heard and

seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart" (p. 79). Many people who have experienced trauma may be drawn toward isolating themselves or finding comfort in relationships with others who share similar experiences. Porges theory posits that the autonomic nervous system regulates three fundamental physiological states: (1) social engagement, (2) fight or flight, and (3) freeze or collapse. Our perception of safety determines which three of the states is activated in a given moment.

Social Engagement

When something is upsetting or fear-inducing, our facial expressions and our tone of voice tend to automatically shift—these shifts signal to others that we need support. If no one responds in these situations, our perception of the threat may increase, and our limbic system is likely to kick in. Our sympathetic nervous system activates our muscles, heart, and lungs for a fight or flight response.

Fight or Flight

When our fight or flight system is activated, our breathing speeds up and our heart starts pumping faster. If we cannot physically escape the threat or we perceive what is happening as inevitable our body is likely to activate the dorsal vagal complex, which sends us into a collapse or freeze response. This activation may occur in instances where someone is physically held down during an assault, when someone is trapped in a vehicle after a collision, or if a child cannot escape an abusive home life.

Freeze or Collapse

When fight or flight does not resolve a threat, the reptilian brain is activated. Freeze and collapse are controlled by the dorsal vagal complex, "an evolutionarily

ancient part of the parasympathetic nervous system that is associated with digestive symptoms like diarrhea and nausea. It also slows down the heart and induces shallow breathing" (p. 83). When this system is activated, it takes over and one's awareness of others and oneself ceases to matter.

Implications from Porges Theory

As mammals, it is natural for our state to be "on guard," but as humans we must be able to control our defensive systems in order to form authentic connections with others. For us to play, find partners, and take care of young children our brains need to be able to shift between evaluating and responding to threats and experiencing a sense of safety, calm and relaxation. When people experience trauma, they tend to become hypervigilant or numb, prohibiting their ability to enjoy ordinary pleasures and their ability to be alert to new threats. It is especially challenging for people who have experienced trauma to discern when they are safe and when they need to activate a response to threats. People who have experienced trauma require experiences that serve to restore a sense of physical safety.

Educational Context

van der Kolk suggests that our educational system writ large and other methods that have been employed to treat trauma consistently prioritize "recruiting cognitive capacities of the mind" while bypassing the emotional-engagement system (p. 86). It is well documented that intense emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety inhibit one's ability to reason. We also know that people who have experienced trauma need opportunities to engage the safety system of the brain, yet schools and professionals tend to ignore this and continue to promote new ways of thinking. van der Kolk reminds us

that children with 'bad behavior' have often established these repeated actions as a means to survive serious threats. He argues that the last things that should be cut from schools are "chorus, physical education, recess, and anything else involving movement, play, and joyful engagement" because these are precisely the activities that help us to regulate our bodies (p. 86). Porges' Polyvagal Theory helped scientists understand and become more intentional of using both top-down (those which activate social engagement) and bottom-up (those which calm physical tension in the body) approaches in working with people who have experienced trauma. Practices that have long existed outside of Western medicine, like singing, dancing, chanting, drumming, rely on "interpersonal rhythms, visceral awareness, and vocal and facial communication, which help shift people out of fight/flight states, recognize their perception danger, and increase their capacity to manage relationships" (p. 86).

Mind and Body Agency

Van der Kolk's definition for agency in the context of his work is worth spending some time with.

> 'Agency' is the technical term for the feeling of being in charge of your life: knowing where you stand, knowing that you have a say in what happens to you, knowing that you have some ability to shape your circumstances (p. 95)
>
> Agency starts with what scientists call interoception, our awareness of our subtle sensory, body-based feelings: the greater that awareness, the greater our potential to control our lives. Knowing *what* we feel is the first step to knowing why we feel that way. If we are aware of the constant changes in our inner and outer environment, we can mobilize to manage them (p. 95-96).

He goes on to describe the critical role of our medial prefrontal cortex, which learns to observe what is happening inside of our body. As mentioned earlier, trauma is capable of shutting down our awareness of what is happening internally and can also significantly

inhibit our ability to perceive and navigate the world around us. This is all relevant to agency because when we have a comfortable connection with our inner sensations, if we are able to trust they provide us with accurate information, then we also tend to feel more in control of our body, feelings, and self. When people who have experienced trauma do not feel a sense of safety, their bodies are regularly overwhelmed by visceral warning signs, leading one to develop an expertise in numbing ones' awareness of these internal sensations. The more someone avoids internal warning signs, the more intense these sensations become.

> People who cannot comfortable notice what is going on inside become vulnerable to respond to any sensory shift either by shutting down or by going into a panic—they develop a fear of fear itself (p. 97).

This explanation fits with my experience of having panic attacks. The first panic attack I ever had, occurred after submitting a final paper at the end of my first semester of graduate school. It was odd to me, because I felt intense anxiety throughout the final weeks but expected to feel a sense of relief once I finished my work. Instead, it was as if all the building anxiety that accumulated over the weeks rushed my body after I pressed "submit." I started feeling short of breath, having never experienced a panic attack before, I thought I might be having a heart attack. I immediately texted my brother that something was wrong and that I couldn't breathe. My brother advised me to focus on exhaling rather than trying to take deep breaths. I did not understand this at the time, but now recognize that he knew the importance of activating my parasympathetic nervous system. My sympathetic nervous system was sending adrenaline throughout my body and I needed to intentionally activate the parasympathetic nervous system by focusing on exhaling, which would slow down my heart rate and calm me down. While it took over

an hour, I eventually reclaimed my breath and my body started to calm down. In the months that followed, I had several panic attacks triggered by what I perceived as obscure and insignificant events—however, even then, I recognized my body was more likely to initiate a full-fledged panic attack when I recalled and feared the symptoms of the first panic attack experience. This fear was exacerbated in instances where I found myself in public spaces, whereas if I were in the comfort of my own home, I knew I could escape into my room without anyone witnessing my coming "undone."

van der Kolk cautions that when we ignore or distort our body's messages, we also dim our ability to differentiate between truly dangerous situations and recognize what is safe or nourishing. He suggests that self-regulation requires us to be in tune with our body.

> Self-regulation depends on having a friendly relationship with your body. Without it you have to rely on external regulation—from medication, drugs like alcohol, constant reassurance, or compulsive compliance with the wishes of others (p. 97).

While we may be able to suppress our inner sensations, this does not stop the stress hormones from remaining active in our bodies. Because stress hormones will continue to pump through the bodies of people who are suppressing their inner sensations, it is important to become in tune to these physical sensations and emotions as a means of addressing trauma. Somatic symptoms, such as chronic pain, headaches, digestive issues, fatigue, some forms of asthma, for which there is no clear physical basis are often present in children and adults who have experienced trauma. van der Kolk sites that, "traumatized children have fifty times the rate of asthma as their non traumatized peers" (p. 98).

Alexithymia

Alexithymia is Greek for not having words for feelings. Psychiatrists observe this phenomenon in children and adults who are unable to describe what they are feeling because they are not able to identify the meaning of their physical sensations. Maybe you have had the experience of crying without knowing why or the experience of feeling scared but saying you are fine. When we don't know how to discern what is happening on the inside, we can become out of touch with our needs—whether that be taking care of hygiene, getting enough sleep, or eating nourishing meals. Someone experiencing alexithymia tends to "register emotions as physical problems rather than signals that something deserves their attention," for example rather than feeling sad or upset, they may experience a stomach ache or pain for which no other symptoms can be found (p. 98). Difficulty interpreting sensations or struggling to be in tune with what is happening inside one's body can contribute toward an inhibited ability to protect oneself. It can increase the likelihood of revictimization and contribute to difficulty experiencing joy and a sense of purpose in one's life.

Depersonalization

The experience of losing one's sense of self is also common during traumatic experiences and is described as depersonalization. A group of neuroscientists at the University of Geneva induced out-of-body experiences by delivering mild electric current to a part of patients' brains called the temporal parietal junction. One patient described the sensation that, "she was hanging from the ceiling, looking down at her body" while another described sensing, "an eerie feeling that someone was standing behind her" (p. 100). People who have experienced trauma may also describe a sense of losing oneself.

Connecting with Our Body

van der Kolk makes a bold argument about recovering from trauma, that one "cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies" (p.100). He goes on to describe that self-awareness is a necessary first step in "releasing the tyranny of the past" (p. 100). When he supports the people he works with, he coaches them to notice and describe feeling in their body. He does not ask people to describe emotions such as anxiety or frustration, rather he asks them to describe the physical sensations beneath emotions such as a tightening in their chest or their stomach dropping. He focuses on supporting individuals to become aware of their breathing, gestures, and movements, especially when discussing events they dismiss as not bothering them. When people engage this awareness-work, it can elicit discomfort or precipitate flashbacks. van der Kolk cautions that it is possible for people to be retraumatized by accessing the past and advocates for readily available strategies be available to people attempting support individuals that have experienced trauma in this process. It is common for doctors to prescribe medications rather than teach individuals skills necessary for dealing with intense physical reactions. I, myself, was prescribed Xanax when I saw my primary care physician for my panic attacks. However, people who have experienced trauma can be supported to build awareness through practice connecting their physical sensations to psychological events, allowing them to reconnect with their body.

Summary

In this chapter I drew on neuroscience to provide an overview of our brain, body, and the impact of trauma. I conducted a brief historicizing of the fields of psychiatry,

psychology and neuroscience and introduced you to the anatomy of our brain as well as the physiology of our nervous system. I connected the relevance of this information to an educational context, made parallels to discussions of agency, and the importance of connecting one's mind and body in addressing trauma in our life.

In Chapter Six, I illustrate how a neuroscientific reading can provide another lens for examining phenomenological material, post-reflexion journal entries, and understanding of my own critical consciousness taking shape. I show how this neuroscientific reading shapes the lens for which I examine the second, third, and fourth sources of post-intentional phenomenological material. I describe the openings and possibilities for using a neuroscience frame for examining the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research.

Chapter 6

Productions

I have situated critical consciousness as provoked and produced through critical action, reflection and dialogue and our ability to cultivate political efficacy. This research has helped me understand that we also need to acknowledge and listen to the information our body communicates. We experience the world through our body before we cognitively process those experiences and by honing our attunement to bodily sensations, we can learn more about ourselves and the world we find ourselves in. As I explore these provocations reading with theory, I can see how critical consciousness might be taking shape in our body's responses to the world and in the work we do to better understand the information coming from our bodies. Specifically, I read these provocations through van der Kolk (2014), Menakem (2017), and Ladson-Billings (1995, 2006, 2014). van der Kolk's neuroscientific approach for understanding the body-brain connection and trauma offers insights into how our body communicates and processes information as we navigate our worlds. Menakem's work on historical trauma manifesting in our racialized bodies allows us to layer this neuroscientific understanding of our body-brain connections as they are situated within a social context. Ladson-Billing's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy offers a framework for exploring components of student achievement, cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness. I weave the theories of these three individuals together to explore critical consciousness taking shape for young people and myself through a process of youth participatory action research.

Our bodies matter greatly. Menakem's contributions help to situate our physical bodies within a historical context that is important for understanding our present

experiences. I have been tempted, time and time again, to overemphasize the role of our thinking brain in exploring how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults. Neuroscience research reminds me that our body is an important source of knowledge and that our bodies teach us about ourselves and the world around us before our thinking brain receives and processes information and allows us to make choices. There is a great deal to learn from our bodies and our tendency to dismiss, ignore, and underestimate the role of bodily-knowledge inhibits our individual and collective agency. Critical consciousness is provoked and produced in learning to understand the knowledge that we find stored in our bodies.

In this chapter I show how a neuroscientific reading shapes the lens for which I read my post-reflexion journal entry and my second, third, and fourth sources of post-intentional phenomenological materials. I share some openings and possibilities a neuroscience reading offers for exploring how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research.

In Chapter Five, I provided a brief historicizing of the field of psychiatry and how neuroscience research has led to important developments related to our understanding of the brain and body. I want to revisit van der Kolk here in preparation for reading the first production. He approaches his work operating with four assumptions (what he names as "fundamental truths"):

> (1) our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being; (2) language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common sense of meaning; (3) we have the ability to regulate our own physiology, including some of the so-called involuntary functions of the body and brain, through such basic activities as breathing, moving, and touching; and (4) we can change social

> conditions to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive (p. 38).

The first assumption that relationships and community are central to our well-being is important because it disrupts a dominant neoliberal context in which individuals alone are responsible for the status of their health and well-being and instead suggests that our well-being is impacted by and situated within the social fabric of our lives. The second assumption that "language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences," is important because it teaches us that telling and sharing our stories with others offers us an opportunity to connect with others and find meaning. The third assumption, that we can use our breath, movement, and touch to help regulate our mind and body is empowering—there are small things we can do to alter our health and well-being. The fourth assumption, that we can individually and collectively change the social conditions of our environments speaks to the importance of developing a critical consciousness and cultivating our political efficacy. van der Kolk's assumptions are evidence of a strengths-based approach to understanding and responding to trauma in our lives. These assumptions are important to foreground while engaging a neuroscientific reading because they can move us away from pathologizing people who have experienced trauma and toward forming intentional relationships with ourselves and one another. I think it is incredibly important that we understand trauma is something that we may all experience in different ways. Sometimes a traumatic event can be processed as a relatively small and insignificant experience to one person and as an inescapable or significantly impactful experience to another. Our bodies are uniquely positioned within the context of a patriarchal white supremacist culture. So, it is important to refrain from trying to use this framework as a mechanism for pathologizing individual bodies. Instead,

I invite you to pay attention to your (raced, classed, gendered) body, the connections you make, the disconnections you feel, the discomfort you experience, the resistance you observe. How is your body positioned uniquely in the context of the society you live and move through? What opportunities might a neuroscience framework offer you, in healing and growing in your body?

Mind and Body Connectivity

As I prepared to begin crafting this section of the chapter, I did a body scan. Starting at the top of my body and working my way down, I made several observations: my brain feels foggy, my eyes feel strained, my heart feels sunken, my chest tight, my arms are tingly and my fingers shaky, my legs are restless, bouncing up and down in the chair. These physical sensations tell me about my emotional state. When I pause to wonder about the physical sensations I'm experiencing, I understand myself to be feeling anxious—anxious about the content of this chapter, about the deadline approaching, about the perception others will have of my work. I'm feeling fragile—unsure of which grief emotions may surge as I work my way through these stories. I take in another physical observation, I have been unconsciously taking short, shallow breaths—and as soon as I pay attention to my breathing, I start to breathe deeper and slower, an attempt to simmer my anxiety, calm my nerves, and clarify my thinking. I start to pay attention to the story I am telling myself in this moment, "your work is valuable, you can do this, just start typing—get your ideas down, then make decisions about what to keep and what not to keep."

When I scanned my body prior to writing, I paid close attention to the internal signals the physical sensations in my body were communicating. By becoming aware of

the physical sensations I was experiencing, I became cognizant of my emotional state. I was feeling anxious and vulnerable. Through a process of becoming attuned to my body I simultaneously became aware of some choices available to me as a means of addressing the physical sensations and emotions I was experiencing. I deepened and slowed my breathing, I sat up straight and uncrossed my legs, resting my feet on the ground below my chair. While these actions did not resolve my anxiety or make me feel less vulnerable, they did lighten the intensity and provide me with a sense of grounded-ness. When I juxtapose this current moment with the first post-reflexion journal entry I wrote in February of 2019, there are stark differences. I want to bring you back to the first provocation (first introduced in chapter four) so that I can read this provocation through a neuroscience lens, drawing on van der Kolk's theorizing of trauma and Menakem's theorizing of historical trauma.

PIP Material Source 1/Provocation 1

Putting in words what I've been feeling and experiencing the past year and a half. In fall 2017, I planned to start analyzing data from the summer research project. My goal was to submit a draft of my findings by December, to write and submit a draft of my introduction and conclusions by January/February, and to submit a completed full draft of my dissertation by March. I planned to defend and graduate in Spring 2018. Instead…

I got engaged Nov. 4, 2017
My partner and I celebrated our engagement in Miami with my brother Nov. 8-12, 2017
My brother scared the shit out of me
My brother went off the grid, Nov. 18th
My brother is gone forever, Nov. 27th.
We planned my brother's funeral
We made space to visit him at the cemetery
The depths and darkness of loss makes its home in me
I could not think, write, be
Every minute awake, I felt consumed by the immense weight of loss
We planned our wedding
I tried to teach
I tried to show up for young people
I tried to be engaged in daily life
I cried--all the time, everywhere
I experienced my life as life before/life after

I committed time to yoga, eating healthy, and sleeping
I soaked up as much sun and heat as I could during summer
We got married
I adjusted my timeline, I still wasn't ready
Fall now, it's been a year, it's time
I'm not ready to write, to go where I'm most insecure, I cannot shake what little strength I've built up in the last year, I might come undone
I'm teaching, I'm energized
I'm reading--a lot, it is 'work' I tell myself, it may not be writing but I'm readying my mind and body
I'm surviving--1st anniversary without my brother
I'm rereading, re-engaging material I drew on when I started this journey
I'm synthesizing ideas
I'm creating an artifact that I will rely on throughout this process
I'm trying to find balance
I'm ready to do this and I want to enjoy myself as much as possible through it, it cannot be painstaking and miserable because… I have. No. Space. left for that
My sister has cancer
… do I?
I need my sister to be ok.
Every time I gain some momentum, I'm thrust back toward the depths of my grief and I am afraid I'll get stuck there
It's not a lot but it's something
I can see the end in view
But A LOT has to happen

(Tracy Post-Reflexion Journal, 2/9/19)

I start by naming the entry as my first attempt to capture, in writing, the feelings and events that have taken place over the last year. I then go on to describe the timeline I planned on executing to complete my dissertation before everything happened. When I start to timeline the events, my writing shifts—it becomes fragmented in structure, each line an isolated event, feeling, or thought. When I read each line to myself now, it evokes a visceral experience. Some lines make me feel like I have been punched in the stomach, others make me hold my breath, some make my eyes well with tears. Pain, sadness, loss, shock, hope all wash over me. Still, these words on the page do not feel like enough, there is only so much language available to me to try and describe what happened and how I experienced it.

van der Kolk introduced Alexithymia as a phenomenon observed in children and adults that are unable to describe what they are feeling because they are not able to identify the meaning of their physical sensations. Sometimes, these emotions get registered as physical problems rather than internal signals communicating our needs. In such instances, people may experience aches and pains for which no other symptoms can be found. I struggled to find words that communicated what I felt and needed. During the days, weeks, and months following my brother's passing the weight of my grief was often debilitating. I struggled to do even the most ordinary things. I recall waking up wondering how I could possibly make it through an entire day. I was exhausted. Sleep was a reprieve from the sadness I felt while awake and so I slept, a lot. I felt like it took all my energy to just "show up" in the spaces and places I was expected to be. Whether that was in the classroom, at the community-based organization, or in the kitchen helping prepare a meal for myself and my partner. I felt so frustrated that "showing up" was all I could offer to the people around me. I felt like I was failing myself and everyone around me because I perceived myself to be a shell of the person I was before. My body was physically present in spaces and places I was expected, but my mind was not *there*. I knew what I was "supposed" to do but these tasks and responsibilities were at a minimum overwhelming and at their worst they felt impossible. I did not have the "headspace" to write. I was consumed by grief. For months and months, I felt like I was not doing what I needed to be doing to finish my dissertation. Instead, I filled my hours with activities that felt less important but were the only things I could do to make myself feel well. I spent time nourishing my body with healthy meals and committing to a yoga practice that helped me feel present in my mind and body. I went for long walks with family and

friends. I gave myself time and began a process of healing, despite feeling frustrated by how long it took and how much my body and mind were demanding of me.

For months, I viewed this time as a barrier to my goals of completing my dissertation and engaging in meaningful work. However, I am now able to see and understand that this time was both necessary and critical to arriving at this current moment, where I have reclaimed a sense of my well-being and capacity to feel motivated and passionate about the work that I engage. In slowing down to examine my healing process, I read three of van der Kolk's assumptions/fundamental truths at work.

(1) Our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being;

When my world was turned upside down, I struggled to feel grounded and to reorient myself. The people in my life: my parents, my sister, my partner, my students, the young people at the community based organization, my colleagues, my advisers, my therapist all continued to show up for me, even though the way I showed up with them was different. Through their consistent presence in my life, I felt cared for and supported. They reminded me of my value and the importance of the various roles and responsibilities I fulfill.

(2) language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common sense of meaning;

I regularly attended therapy and communicated with my friends and family via phone calls, coffee dates, and home visits. While it was difficult to share what happened and how I was processing and feeling, I was persistent in my efforts. I read stories from others who experienced life altering loss. I joined a grief group where I connected with

others in my community who lost someone they loved and found some comfort in our shared connection around loss. I started researching what happens to our minds and bodies when we experience something life-altering, something traumatic, as a means of better understanding what I was experiencing. This research allowed me to make connections between my experiences and my brother's experiences. The information I was learning provided me with multiple pathways to process that were not previously available to me. The information I was learning allowed me to begin fostering my sense of agency—which had largely disappeared during this time.

(3) we have the ability to regulate our own physiology, including some of the so-called involuntary functions of the body and brain, through such basic activities as breathing, moving, and touching;

At a time when I felt so out of control, there were a few things that felt within the scope of my power. While these did not always feel like they were making a difference in the moment, I knew there were concrete things I could choose that might contribute toward my healing and well-being. Some of the conscious choices I made were choosing to rest when I felt tired, allowing myself to cry when I felt sad, staying well-hydrated, eating lots of fruits and vegetables, getting fresh air by going for walks, and making it onto my yoga mat. I downloaded an app that coached me to breathe slowly and deeply, and I used it regularly. I let my partner hold me, which made me feel both seen and safe. I believe these things quite literally saved my life. I don't know what would have happened without access to these choices or if I had not followed through with these corresponding actions. Reading this provocation through a neuroscience perspective, drawing on van der Kolk's theorizing of trauma, provides an important understanding of how trauma

manifested in my body and the way I needed to engage my body in my healing; The seemingly unproductive work I was doing to be "well" was a necessary step in my healing. As I addressed my physiological needs through therapy, eating well, sleeping, intentional breathing and movement, I simultaneously worked toward being able to re-engage my intellectual cognitive mind. At a metacognitive level, my critical consciousness has swelled through the process of naming and describing my healing process and increasing my understanding of how my experience of trauma manifested in my body. Through paying attention to my physiological symptoms of grief and the time it has taken me to heal and then by reading those experiences through van der Kolk's neuroscientific perspective I have increased both my understanding and agency of how I can continue to heal from my brother's loss. With this knowledge, I have concrete skills for creating space in my nervous system to respond to trauma in the future. I know that our body's stress response is designed to protect us and then when a stress response is activated our body is doing its job well. I also know that a stress response risks becoming chronic if we are unable or unwilling to recognize and address the physical sensations our body is communicating to us. I know that I will be able to put this understanding to work as I choose to prioritize my well-being moving forward. Additionally, this knowledge allows me to meet others where they are as they encounter trauma in their own lives. If I find myself in a classroom where I see a child behaving in a way that could be read as disruptive or problematic, I am compelled to first determine whether that child may be operating from a fight, flight, or freeze response. If so, then the most important thing I must do is work to restore that child's sense of safety, followed by supporting the child to return to a settled state in their body. It is important in school contexts and classroom

spaces to understand that many of the behaviors we see are behaviors that children have learned, brilliantly, to protect themselves from perceived threats, real or imagined. While these behaviors can pose challenges to learning and the learning environment, it is critical that educators and adults working with young people separate these behaviors from the individual exhibiting them and support these individuals in learning to regulate and restore a state of well-being. van der Kolk's work offers an important introduction to understanding our bodies and how our brain comes to build our understanding of the world through our embodied experiences. Menakem (2017) brilliantly expands upon the neuroscience foundation that van der Kolk outlines by situating bodies within a historical context.

Historical Trauma

Menakem's work (*My Grandmother's Hands*, 2017) on racialized trauma through a social work lens offers further considerations and implications relevant to this study. Also drawing on recent neuroscience research, Menakem situates trauma within a historical context, explicitly writing to white, Black, and police bodies in the U.S. Menakem argues that the divisiveness of the current context is not just due to recent social and political struggle but rather can be traced back to two primary bloodlines of trauma: (1) from one European body to another during the Middle Ages, imported to the New World by colonists, and then passed down through generations of descendants and (2) the trauma European colonists instilled in the bodies of Africans that were "forcibly imported as indentured servants, and later as property to the New World" who then passed their trauma through generations of descendants (p. xv). Menakem argues that the manifestations of social and political struggle and violence we bear witness to is a result

of the trauma that lives inside our bodies and that is through our bodies that we must resolve this tension.

> For the past three decades, we've earnestly tried to address white-body supremacy in America with reason, principles, and ideas—using dialogue, forums, discussions, education, and mental training. But the widespread destruction of Black bodies continues...It's not that we've been lazy or insincere. But we've focused our efforts in the wrong direction. We've tried to teach our brains to think better about race. But white-body supremacy doesn't live in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies (p. 5).

The language "white body supremacy" is used to describe the ways whiteness operates in U.S. culture as part of an operating system, "...always functioning in the background, often invisibly, in our institutions, our relationships, and our interactions" (p. xix). This operating system impacts white folks, Black Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC). While it is common to experience guilt or blame when examining white-body supremacy in our lives, Menakem suggests that we bring our attention to our bodies. With this commitment in mind, I want to spend some time reading and theorizing moments from the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th sources of post-intentional materials in which young people are recognizing their embodied knowledge, reflecting upon that bodily-knowing, and increasing their understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit.

PIP Material Source #2

The second source of post-intentional phenomenological material was an excerpt of discussion immediately following the girls' focus group interview. Sydney—a young Black woman—identifies a prejudgment she's made about Kayla—a young white woman. Again, I want to highlight that this is a paradoxical, eye-opening, concerning, and even predictable moment. Even as critical consciousness was provoked and taking shape the power of whiteness was at work. In that particular moment Sydney shares that

she realizes she made a racialized judgement about a white group member. She apologizes, reflecting that her assumption about this individual ended up being incorrect because she was able to find ways to connect with this white group member in ways she assumed she would not. When she starts to articulate why she made the assumptions that she did, she begins to articulate where her assumptions came from. She shares that she has heard stories of her family members' lived experiences that have contributed to her understanding of who white people are. In her family's stories of their lived experiences, danger is communicated. An adult in Sydney's life was physically attacked by a group of white people. Sydney's mother has experienced racial discrimination in her work place. Reading this moment with Menakem's work on historical trauma in mind, it could read that Sydney's family members' racialized trauma has been passed down to Sydney genetically. The trauma is further instilled in Sydney's body through her family's retelling of their lived experiences. Menakem also makes the claim that this trauma could have been biologically passed down to Sydney through their DNA.

> The transference of trauma isn't just about how human beings treat each other. Trauma can also be inherited genetically. Recent work in genetics has revealed that trauma can change the expression of the DNA in our cells, and these changes can be passed from parent to child (p. 39-40).

Sydney's body is doing its job by using this information to protect her from the real threat of white supremacy in our world. Throughout the youth participatory action research project, the young people repeatedly come together around shared norms and begin to form relationships with one another. These repeated experiences sharing time together, listening to, and hearing one another's experiences related to issues of health and well-being has allowed Sydney to have an experience that contradicts her body's knowledge of a racial threat obtained for her survival. Sydney knows both in her body

and her mind to be skeptical of white people. This experience was powerful because, as she articulates, the assumptions she held prior to participating in the focus group interview and hearing from her white peer challenged her to re-examine her previously held beliefs about her white peer. Her ability to name her body's feelings and reflect upon that bodily knowledge creates space for her to think critically. I read this experience as an opening for Sydney to explore multiple and conflicting ideas about who white people are and the choices she has in connecting with white folks. I want to take a moment here to highlight the paradoxical nature of Sydney, a young Black woman, taking it upon herself to not only recognize the bodily-knowledge she carries, but to share it with the group and then suggest that she needs to check her assumptions about white folks. I do not think it is coincidence that Kayla, the white young woman, is silent during this discussion. For me, this speaks to the power of how whiteness operates and shapes the interactions we have with one another and how we understand ourselves. I do believe Kayla's critical consciousness was also being shaped and I am sure that her assumptions of her Black peers were also challenged, yet they were not shared in anyway. I imagine that Kayla had some feelings during this discussion and was probably also prompted to think about her own prejudgments about her Black peers. We do not know how Kayla is processing this moment because of her silence; And it is very much her privilege that allows her to be passive here. Even though it is uncomfortable for Sydney to share her prejudgment, in doing so, she vulnerably and honestly moves forward. This moment highlights that even in a powerful moment of critical consciousness swelling, the power of whiteness is at work in this space.

When Sydney reflects and chooses to share her reflections with the group, she presents an opportunity for her peers and I to make connections to what she is saying and to think about the ways we have similarly judged people in our lives. When she goes further to explore where her ways of thinking may stem from, we too, are invited to think about how we come to know and understand ourselves and the people around us. It does not take long for the group to name other problematic views held as evidenced in two specific instances, *"Yeah and I feel like too, when you're like extra pretty and a lot of people like you, I feel like you get pre-judged too,"* and "*…Oh. And light skins and dark skins, we, I think we prejudge each other."* In these moments, the young people are naming how women tend to judge other women, often on the basis of their appearance and how Black folks experience colorism, discrimination on the basis of social meaning attached to the shade of one's skin tone. This powerful moment comes out of Sydney's experience participating in focus group discussion, on the topic of health, well-being and barriers to health and well-being. Sydney's willingness to facilitate and engage her peers, as a leader and teacher in her YPAR group, creates a learning opportunity beyond what I could offer her as a teacher in a traditional classroom setting. Sydney's "a ha" moment, and her attune-ness to her own revelations allows each of the participants to also think about what she's named and described in the context of their lives.

In examining this moment and conversation between the young women, we can also see all three tenets of Ladson-Billings theory of culturally relevant pedagogy at work. Ladson-Billings conceptualizes academic success as, "the intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences" (2013, p. 75). In this moment, Sydney can be read as the instructor, engaging her peers in a

reflective discussion of where bias comes from and what the real implications our biases have in our individual and collective experiences. Ladson-Billings' conceptualizes the second tenet, cultural competence as, "the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge and fluency in at least one other culture" (p. 75). The focus group experience allowed the young women a glimpse of one another's cultural ways of being in a context where they were positioned as teachers and learners among each other. This powerful opportunity to learn *with* one another about each other's personal experiences related to health and well-being can be contrasted to the more traditional educational experience of learning *about* other people and cultures. Ladson-Billings conceptualizes the third tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy, the sociopolitical consciousness as, "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real world problems" (p. 75). Sydney identified her bias when she apologized to the group and named her "prejudgment" of the white participant, Kayla. She began to analyze where her biases of white people might come from when she starts talking about the racial discrimination and assault her family has experienced at the hands of white people. She suggests she may consider challenging her biases in the future because the focus group experience with Kayla has provided with her own experience interacting with a white peer, that did not align with her preconceptions. While this conversation ends without resolution or further examination, these ideas have been introduced and massaged and will continue to show up in our bodies and minds as we navigate our worlds.

PIP Material Source #3

The third source of post-intentional phenomenological material was an excerpt of a discussion in which the youth participants and I were reflecting on our experience interviewing a high-ranking public official whose job it is to address health in the local context. There are several provocations of critical consciousness taking shape in this excerpt, some of which can be explored and opened up further with a neuroscience reading of how we come to know things in our body through our vagus nerve, oftentimes before we are able to process and articulate the information in our rational or emotional brain. In particular, I want to slow down and zoom in on Elijah's comment, *"that lady was racist."* My response to Elijah in that moment was a press for him to articulate why he felt that way, specifically I asked, *"What makes you say that? Tell us what made you feel that way."* I am pushing Elijah to articulate his feelings, to bring these feelings to his thinking brain and make sense of them. This could be read as evidence of me pushing an understanding that depends primarily on the thinking brain and as a missed opportunity for exploring the bodily-knowing that Elijah was expressing. How might Elijah's, the youth participants, and my own critical consciousness have been provoked if I had structured the reflection of that experience in a way that fostered an attunement with our bodies?

With this commitment at the forefront of your mind, I would like to invite you to pay attention to your body as I share more context for the events leading up to the day the young people and I went to interview the high-ranking public official whose job it is to understand and address health in our city. In particular, I want you to pay attention to the physical sensations your body experiences as well as any emotions that arise for you.

It was a muggy July morning. When the kids arrive, they get off the bus, sign in, and head to the large cafeteria for breakfast. Typically, after breakfast the entire summer program (grades 6-12) participates in a group activity called Harambee where the group comes together sings, dances, chants. The activity is intended to create community, set a positive tone for the day, and give the group the opportunity to be and give celebratory messages to one another. After Harambee, the 13-17-year-old youth research participants head to a designated classroom space (the summer program takes place at a local community and technical college downtown). In this space, we check-in with one another, discuss the goals for our day together, and get started with our day's work. However, on this day when we move into the classroom, we are greeted by the program behavior specialist. He is a long-time staff and community member, well respected and loved by most if not all. He asks the kids to turn over their cell phones and any personal belongings they wish to keep safe while they travel off-campus for their interview this morning. The concern is that there may be some kind of security we have to pass through and that these belongings, typically carried in purses and backpacks, will slow down or pose unnecessary challenges for our group. The young people are compliant but not happy when they learn they have to turn over their personal items, particularly their cell phones. Oh, and hats, there will be no hats in the government building. The behavior specialist reminds the group that we are representing our program and that this an important person they have the opportunity to interview, he firmly suggests that the young people be on their best behavior. In addition, we have another staff member joining as a chaperone. This staff member helps out with logistics, ensures we have enough snacks each day, that all the staff has materials they need, that our staff room is clean and organized. She keeps the program running smoothly in important ways. She happens to be a white woman and most of the kids are familiar with her. They have seen her around, doing the work that she does for our team. She knows some of the kid's names, but she has not had the opportunity to form close relationships with any of the young people. She has been asked to attend this trip with our group to help make sure things run smoothly and for there to be another adult present. So, for adults present, we have myself and another woman (both of us white) and a Black man who has built some relationships with the young people, limited by missing multiple weeks of programming

due to a health emergency. I check to make sure he can make the walk with us. I ask him to let me know if it becomes too much. He assures me that he'll be fine, this type of walk is just what the doctor prescribed.

The government office that we are heading to is about a mile away, closer to the center of downtown. I have a bunch of cash in case it starts pouring for us to ride the city bus, however, I am hoping we do not have to do this because I worry about taking a group our size on public transportation. I check the time and forecast. We need to leave soon if we are going to be on time. It's going to rain today but the weather looks alright for the time being. I suggest we start out walking and then make our way on buses if the weather gets worse. The young people share mixed responses about this mile-long walk, some are happy to walk, and others express that a mile-long walk is far too long. I let the group know I will bring pencils, copies of our interview questions, and a recorder for the interview. Because I am bringing all these materials, I will wear my backpack.

When our group starts walking, we spread out. There are a group of young men walking more quickly at least a block ahead of the majority of the group and there are a group of young women walking slower and further behind the majority of the group as well. It's kind of drizzly but not raining. Some kids express they think we should get on the bus. I want to get there quickly and on time, so I encourage us to keep walking. I am anxious about the weather too, but I really do not want to take the bus, figure out how much it will cost for our whole group, overwhelm regular commuters etc. It feels like a pretty long walk. When we arrive at the government building the kids are thirsty and ready to sit down. I ask the kids to keep their voices down as we move through the building, most likely I said something about needing to be quiet, so we do not disrupt people working. We do not have to go through any security, but the government building has a serious feeling to it. It is clean and quiet. We pass people that are professionally dressed. We are wearing primarily shorts, t-shirts, and jeans. We have to take two escalators and an elevator to get to the right floor.

When we get to the correct floor we are in a long narrow hallway. I ask the kids to wait for me so I can let the staff know we are here. I go into a glass door and speak to the first person I see. We are a couple minutes early. I see the high-ranking public official enter the office, and it appears that she is arriving to start her day. I ask her if there is a

space, she would like us to wait for her and assure she should take the time she needs; I know that we are a little early. She may be a little flustered. Perhaps we are a larger group than she anticipated. She invites us into a conference room down the hall. The kids are expressing how thirsty they are, and she offers to track down some water.

We move into the conference room and a few staff members bring Styrofoam cups and pitchers of water. I notice that we are going to need more chairs and I ask if there are more we can help bring in, a staff member says they will get more. The water is warm, and the young people are dissatisfied, I'm pretty sure at least one young person said something like, "this water is nasty!" The room has large windows and we are sitting around a large square table with black rolling chairs. More chairs are brought in and we take seats, in no particular arrangement. In the room at this time, it is me, two adults and about fifteen young people. I pass out pencils and the interview paper. I remind the youth participant researchers that volunteered to ask specific interview questions which question they are asking. I encourage everyone to listen carefully and jot notes during our interview.

When the high-ranking public official comes back into the room we get started. She sits down in a corner spot. She strikes me as nervous, so I suggest we begin by introducing ourselves before diving into our interview questions. I ask the young people to share their name and where they go to school. We go around the group. As we dive into the interview questions, I read that the young people have varying levels of investment in the conversation, comfort in the space, and energy levels. I read this because some young people are slumped in their seats and one fell asleep. Some of the kids are listening closely—I read this because we deviate a bit from the interview questions we prepared in advance when young people add questions of their own. Some of the young people are far enough from the high ranking official that their line of sight is constricted, the young people clustered in difficult to see parts of the room are making comments to one another, and at one point one gets the giggles. I'm observing how we are in this space and I'm taking voracious notes on what the public official is sharing. I want to both be modeling what I have asked the young people to do and how I expect the interview exchange looks and feels. However, the other white-woman chaperone is anxious. I read her as anxious because she doesn't sit down. She jumps from group to

group and "shhhh's" the young people and she puts her hands in their faces if she feels they are talking or not focused. Her facial expression is intense—it's communicating: "sit up, listen, and keep your mouth closed." It's making me uncomfortable, but I do not address her. I'm frustrated with her because she is doing exactly what I have been actively choosing NOT to do all summer, control the bodies in the room for my comfort. I'm frustrated because as a white woman she's doing what so many white women in authority positions, in school and classroom spaces, do to young Black men and women. I'm frustrated because as a white woman myself, I feel she is undoing the work I have done to disrupt traditional adult-youth relationships, my work re-distributing power to all members of our research team, my work to be a white woman who forms and enters the work we share through relationships. I'm hoping she stops because I feel like her aggressiveness is escalating the behaviors--for example, the young people are offended when she gets in their face and in what I perceive as a moment of discomfort or anger, a couple make faces back at her, argue back to her, and continue on with what they were doing. I feel like I need to pull her aside and tell her to calm down. I worry that the young people are going to be upset with me for not advocating for them. I just want her to stop but I do not do anything to change her behavior.

As I reread and relive this story in my mind, I recognize discomfort in my body. I hoped the interview experience would be powerful, informative, and profound. I worry that this experience may have done more harm than good. I worry about the little things I did and did not do and how that contributed to the overall experience for each of the young people present, for the chaperones, and for the high-ranking public official. I am left with some questions: as a young Black person, how might if have felt to be required to leave your personal belongings? How might if have felt to walk a mile to an unfamiliar and official government building in the drizzly warm weather? How might it have felt for a young Black male to be told not to wear a hat in this space? How might it have felt to be dressed in your casual summer clothing in an air-conditioned government building comprised of mostly white people, dressed professionally, with seemingly important

work to do? How might it have felt to listen to an adult, a white woman, talk about health disparities in our community while youth likely felt that she did not understand their lived experiences? How might it have felt to be watched, monitored, and scolded by an anxious white woman chaperone? How might all of these experiences be inseparable and informative in reading Xavier's conclusion: "that lady was racist"?

In the next three sections and throughout the rest of my work, I made a conscious choice to write about bodies, rather than individuals. I do this for the purpose of reading this phenomenon and to further emphasize the knowledge that is stored in our bodies. I do not intend to dehumanize or simplify the complexity of people's identities and experiences. I do intend to draw us deeper into reading the phenomenon through a neuroscience perspective of historical trauma.

In My White Body

I benefit from white-body supremacy—regardless of my commitment to disrupting it and my commitment to social justice and racial equity—I have certain privileges because of the color of my skin. I did not earn these privileges; these are the things I am granted because of the way whiteness has been socially constructed and because I live and move through the world in a white-body. I have work to do healing and growing from both my personal trauma and from the trauma I have inherited in a white supremacist culture. I know, from van der Kolk and Menakem's work, that my body responds to the other bodies and the world around me through categorizing people and situations as safe or dangerous. My body does not stop and wait for me to cognitively process this information—it responds, sometimes in conflicting ways to the thoughts I have. For many white Americans, no matter what they think or believe, an encounter with

a Black body will be categorized as dangerous, making it difficult to settle the white body. The perceived danger does not emanate from the Black body itself, it is more likely from the pervasive images, ideas, and narratives that are perpetuated and have been institutionalized over hundreds of years, for the benefit of powerful white bodies (Menakem, 2017). If and when I experience fear in my white-body in the presence of Black-bodies it is likely that I will also feel guilty and experience a strong sense of shame. It can be painful to observe and wonder what is happening in these instances and it is common for many white people to avoid, deny, and prevent this discomfort from happening. White people may do this when they deny they are racist because they have Black friends or family members, white people may do this when they move out of neighborhoods as more Black people move in (white flight), white people may do this when they choose to ignore racist comments and jokes that other white people make in their presence. Menakem makes a distinction between two kinds of discomfort or pain: "clean pain" and "dirty pain" (p.19).

Clean pain: "pain that mends and can build your capacity for growth. It's the pain you experience when you know, exactly, what you need to say or do; when you really, really don't want to say or do it; and you do it anyway. It's also the pain you experience when you have no idea what to do; when you're scared or worried about what might happen; and when you step forward into the unknown anyway, with honesty and vulnerability" (p. 19)

Dirty pain: "the pain of avoidance, blame, and denial. When people respond from their most wounded parts, become cruel or violent, or physically or emotionally run away, they experience dirty pain. They also create more of it for themselves and others" (p. 20)

In my white body, I need to become attuned to the pain I experience. If and when I recognize, accept, and work with the pain I am experiencing, I am able to metabolize it in powerful and constructive ways. Through this process of recognizing, accepting, and

working with pain, I am simultaneously making space in my nervous system to respond in more ways with greater capacity. I have to engage my body to do this work. It is in the practice of settling my body that I am able to be anti-oppressive in the present moment. When we avoid, blame, and deny the bodily sensations our body communicates we create more pain for ourselves and others. Menakem is intentional in addressing all white-bodies through his work with healing historical trauma.

> White progressives have their own forms of dirty pain. They include white guilt; white savior complex ("Let me help you" and "I can fix this!"; ugly sympathy ("you poor, poor victims"); and taking over all the energy in the room by freaking out or bursting into tears (2017, p. 166).

He summarizes that white progressives benefit as much from the structural inequities of white-body supremacy as white conservatives and white supremacists, despite the ways they position themselves as opposed to the ideology of discrimination or white supremacy. This is important for me and the white-body work that I engage within my sphere of influence because there is always work to be done as a person who lives in a white body—regardless of our social class, levels of education, choices in occupations, or where we fall on the political spectrum.

White Women Bodies

I am going to describe the ways that I read the bodies of the two other white women present during the interview. Our bodies determine whether we are safe and what we need to survive. Our bodies help us survive by responding to real, imagined, and/or perceived threats. While we know that race is a social construction, it is embedded in our institutions, structures, beliefs, and dominant narratives. The conceptualization of whiteness has shifted over time, during different historical periods, different immigrant groups were considered non-white (including immigrants from Germany, Ireland, and

Italy, and Jewish folks from Eastern Europe). There was a period of time (in the late 1600s and 1700s) that white and Black immigrants cohabitated, living and working together often collectively resisting the oppressive conditions on plantations. One of the ways white landowners responded to this alliance between white and Black workers was to give small pieces of property to other white workers. This granted white workers more authority over the Black workers and over time, worked to align white peoples' interests across social class differences in opposition to Black people. As groups of people were colonized and socialized, whiteness evolved (shifting who was considered white) while Black folks continued to be violated in many ways--from lynching to racial segregation, to the war on drugs, to the prison industrial complex, to everyday micro-aggressions. Menakem argues that "the notion of Black fearsomeness and invulnerability requires its mirror image: the fantasy of white fragility" (p. 97). The dominant narrative and images perpetuated by media about Black bodies are that Black bodies are incredibly strong and frightening and they can handle extreme pain where as the dominant narrative and images perpetuated by media about white-bodies, in particular white-women bodies, continue to perceived as and convey the knowledge that we are fragile and vulnerable, especially vulnerable to Black male-bodies.

> The myth of white fragility thus provided white bodies the necessary justification to act on their strongly felt need to dominate, control, and brutalize Black ones. White bodies felt that maintaining these power dynamics was essential to their survival. They myth of white fragility emboldened many generations of white bodies to harm Black ones, and to excuse and legitimize that harm, under the guides of providing safety for white bodies (p. 98-99).

Menakem goes on to describe that the most dangerous manifestation of white fragility is its "reflexive confusion of fear with danger and comfort with safety" (p. 99). When

white-bodies feel frightened in the presence of Black-bodies, whether a threat exists or not, white-bodies may initiate a fight, flight, or freeze response in order to self-protect.

Menakem argues that white-body supremacy comes at a great cost to white people because there is a great deal of shame present and the white person's awareness of their strength and abilities are diminished.

> ...while the most overt and vocal white supremacists trumpet the superiority of European blood, many white Americans cower in fear and trembling--or beg for help and comfort--in the presence of people with dark skin. There is a real head-banging quality to all of this. Which is why any attempts to address it through the head--the thinking, reasoning brain--are doomed. And it is why every answer needs to begin with the body (p. 107).

In the last section, I talked a bit about my white-body. I want to shift to thinking about the bodies of the other white women present for the interview, first reading the chaperone white-body. I want to begin by first acknowledging that I have found myself exhibiting similar actions, especially in the context of previous teaching experiences where I have also policed Black and Brown bodies. In fact, it is not uncommon to observe white teachers, teaching primarily BIPOC students, controlling bodies—through classroom management strategies dictating what and how bodies can and should move in the school (imagine silent lunches, bodies arranged by height and gender, walking with hands in pockets down a hallway). Drawing upon Menakem's theory of controlling black bodies as a manifestation of white fragility, I read this chaperone's actions as responses to fear. I want to be clear that I do not read her fear as primarily emanating from the young people themselves. Rather, I think her fear is largely emanating from a place of protection, not of self-protection but protection for the community-based organization the program is housed under. This chaperone knew this experience had the potential to impact the perception of the community-based organization more broadly, could have a lasting

impact on future opportunities for the program. What I am reading, is that her desire for a positive impression and experience, for both the young people and the high-ranking public official, produced a real fear and anxiety that manifested in her actions and attempts to control the young people in the room. The chaperone's white-body may be instinctively responding to fear in her body by controlling the Black-bodies in the room. Whether she feels she is doing this to protect the young people and the program or not, the impact on the young people in the room is negative and reinforces their bodily-knowledge of and lived experiences being controlled (or attempted to be controlled) by white-bodies.

Another white-body I want to read is the high-ranking public official whose job is to address health and well-being in the community. One way to read this body is like I described in the vignette, nervous. This white-body may have been anxious speaking in front of a group of people and or the white-body may have experience fear because of the presence of young Black-bodies in the room. In chapter four, we saw that regardless of what she was feeling, the young people perceived her and her actions as nervous and they felt uncomfortable, frustrated, and upset by their reading. This perception stood in the way of her ability to foster an authentic connection with the young people in the room.

Young Black Bodies

I am going to describe some ways that I read what might be happening to young Black bodies present during the interview.

> The Black body in America has been systematically brutalized, mutilated, murdered, abused, controlled, raped, objectified, and demonized by guns, whips, chains, and manacles; by shootings, lynchings, and rape; by laws, policies, social norms, trauma upon trauma compounded (p. 90).

While there was no physical violence to the Black bodies in the room, there were several ways in which the Black bodies can be read as being controlled. First, we required the Black bodies to turn over the cell phones prior to leaving for the interview experience. This may have stripped a sense of safety for some of the young Black bodies. We physically prevented the Black bodies from being able to take action—calling or texting for assistance in the case of an emergency or even just the peace of mind that comes with knowing there is an accessible method for communicating with someone trusted that is outside of the space we occupied together. Additionally, the young people that wore hats were asked to remove them upon entering the government building, communicating that there are specific expectations about how one's body is allowed to look in the space. When the white woman chaperone was acting aggressively to prohibit side conversation, slouched or tired body positioning, or disengagement there was an attempt being made to control the Black bodies in the room. When I did not address and stop the white woman chaperone, I allowed the Black bodies in the room to be controlled. When the high-ranking public official was unable to understand and address the questions of the young Black bodies, the Black bodies could be read as silenced.

Menakem describes some of the pervasive images and concepts of the Black body created through white-body supremacy.

> The Black body is dangerous and threatening; the Black body is impervious to pain; the Black body is incredibly strong and resilient--almost invulnerable; the Black body is hypersexual; the Black body is unattractive, especially in comparison with the white body; therefore, the Black body needs to be managed and controlled—by any means necessary (p. 90).

Menakem suggests that these pervasive images and concepts are not just beliefs, ideas and values rather they are "nonverbal sensations felt by white bodies, along with fear,

hate, and constriction" (p. 91). It does not matter that these are irrational or untrue messages because they are sensations that are experienced in bodies and the reptilian brain is activated when we sense real, perceived, or imagined threats. This is precisely why Menakem argues that healing cannot happen through dialogue, diversity trainings, or cognitive interventions alone, the sensations our body experiences continues to drive our behavior. It also offers plausible explanations for why we continue to have higher arrest and incarceration rates for Black bodies, higher rate of killings of Black bodies by police, and multiple forms of racial profiling of Black bodies.

In addition to understanding what happens to white-bodies in the presence of Black bodies, it is important to understand what can happen to Black-bodies.

> In many African American bodies, this trauma has led to a variety of physical problems, the most common of which are high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, compromised immune systems, heart problems, digestive disorders, chronic inflammation, and musculoskeletal disorders. When we measure the health and lifespan of African Americans, the aggregate results are routinely poorer than for white Americans. For the past several decades, we've tried to address this one body at a time, primarily through medication, exercise programs, lifestyle changes, stress management, and other such strategies. These have had only limited success (p. 130).

Through the process of learning more about trauma and historical trauma, I have reflected on the multiple directions this youth participatory action research project could have gone. We explored adolescent experiences of health, well-being and barriers to health and well-being without discussing or exploring historical trauma while most of the participants identified as Black. We could have drawn upon this information to validate and explore our bodily-knowledge further.

When reading this source of post-intentional phenomenological material with a trauma and historical trauma lens, multiple layers of what might be happening in our

bodies are revealed. Reading the bodies of individuals in the room allows one to wonder about and explore the ways in which our historicized and racialized bodies interact with one another. Slowing down and getting curious about bodies and the information our bodies communicate to ourselves and one another offers openings for us to increase our bodily awareness, our bodily-knowing, and our capacity to settle our bodies when they experience discomfort. In this expansion of awareness, we might find new and different ways for our body to respond and act that is more aligned with our cognitive rational brain. Ultimately, this awareness may afford us greater agency in the struggle to disrupt white-body supremacy.

Without paying attention to our bodies and our bodily-knowledge we risk missing incredibly important information about how power and positionality are operating in this space. If we aspire to create educational experiences for young people to discover their agency and take actions toward addressing real-world problems, I am suggesting that we must read our racialized bodies in our historical context while also learning to pay attention to our bodily-knowing. Taken collectively the work of van der Kolk, Menakem and Ladson-Billings allow us to see the necessity of healing our individual bodies so that we can bodily and cognitively work toward the goal of addressing and transforming systemic racism and oppression.

PIP Material Source #4

The fourth source of post-intentional phenomenological material was a story involving a youth participant's decision to teach our group about autism. The precipitating event involved a moment in which Elijah erupted with frustration and anger and had to physically remove himself from the group's shared space. I want to read this

moment and the events that followed through Menakem's theorizing of the ways in which historical trauma manifests in the body. Menakem describes that culture is what creates a sense of belonging and that when we experience a sense of belonging, we also experience a sense of safety within our body.

> White-body supremacy is already a part of American culture—in the norms we follow, the assumptions we make, the language we speak, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. This is the case no matter the color of our skin. This means we must create new expressions of culture that call out, reject, and undermine white-body supremacy...The good news is that American history is full of such profound cultural changes. If enough people do the same thing over and over or if they share something with each other enough times, eventually it becomes culture (p. 247).

Menakem suggests that to change culture, white-bodies need to engage important body work with other white-bodies, Black-bodies with other Black-bodies, and police-bodies with other police-bodies. Menakem makes this argument because he believes that we must first become successful at paying attention to the information our body communicates to us and learn to respond to this information with effective strategies that settle our body. Menakem believes this work can help our bodies become resilient, less constricted, and create more room in our nervous system which supports our capacity to regulate our responses. In the context of his work, Menakem suggests that white-bodies, Black-bodies, and police-bodies all engage this body-work.

> I'm talking about parallel processes, not isolated ones. Simultaneously, there needs to be collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among the three groups—especially when it comes to social activism. It's a class both/and situation (p. 249).

While Menakem suggests we risk triggering the trauma in one another's bodies when we work in mixed-race groups without having done extensive body work on ourselves and with other people who share our racialized identities. As a parallel to this idea, I want to

think about how Elijah shifted the group dynamic and, in many ways, transformed the culture we were able to foster with one another.

One way that Menakem suggests African American's heal and grow is "to hold onto the strongest and most resilient parts of ourselves, and grow out of the weakest ones. We need to do this as individuals, as a group, and in our culture," (p. 254). I read Elijah as having honored himself in the way he chose to respond to our group after being triggered by our actions. I read Elijah as fed up by the repeated harm and violence he experiences because of the unique challenges he faces in connecting socially with adults and peers. I also read Elijah as incredibly resilient and agentic. I read Elijah as desiring to settle his body and anchor himself so that he is able to move through and metabolize clean pain. It may be helpful to return to one of Elijah's articulations.

> *Elijah: "The reason I wanted to share this is because um because I have autism and you guys didn't know that until now. Remember last week, when I walked out of the room? Like I was, trying to keep it inside me but I just had to walk out and like usually I try to, I don't know why but like try to overcome it and I need to work this out better than last time. Last time, when I was young, I keep disrupting and throwing chairs and stuff and this time I'm trying to be a little calmer."*

I find Elijah's articulation of his body and his brain-body connection to be amazing. I am also amazed by how attuned he is to his body during this discussion. Not only has Elijah taken the time to better understand how his body operates, he has also leveraged his understanding to increase his peers' ability to engage and support him as well as others who have autism. Elijah's awareness of his body-response and his critical reflection of why he felt the way he did in that moment, as well as the choices available to him for responding (by burying it/moving on, avoiding social situations, addressing the group and teaching others what it can be like to live with autism) is illustrative of the agency that is

possible when we slow down and process what we experience in our body as physical sensations.

Although it is impossible to pinpoint why, something in Elijah has shifted. His decision to teach our group about autism and the heightened challenges he experiences in social contexts is a departure from the way he, in his body, have regulated and protected himself in the past. He shares that one of the ways he has learned to avoid conflict is to isolate himself from others.

> *Elijah: "Yeah, there's nothing wrong. And sometimes, I might use autism as an excuse, but basically, I'm saying it's trying to take over my life and the truth is its been in my life. Because, um I try not to interact with no one. I'm kind of antisocial and I always sit at the table by myself, I didn't—basically I'm saying I choose to sit at the table by myself so I won't cause any problems because the truth is when I interact with someone, like socially all the time…*

One reading I have is that through the process of Elijah sharing his experiences with the group, he creates an opportunity to have his frustrations and hurtful experiences validated. This experience becomes further validated when the group listens attentively and responds empathetically.

> When Elijah shares how he experienced that moment leading up to him leaving the room, the group is listening. Tiana reflects on what she did or didn't do in that moment and offers an apology. Jada also apologizes. Several young people listen and nod.
>
> *Tiana: "I'm sorry you felt that way, if I offended you in any way, I am so sorry."*
>
> *Elijah: "That's ok."*
>
> *Jada: "Me too."*

This was a turning point for Elijah and the work he chose and was able to contribute to our group. Elijah did not have any more outbursts. The group actively supported and nurtured their interactions with one another and with Elijah. The group

honored Elijah and did not pity him. Elijah repeatedly took on leadership roles within our collaborative work. During the community presentation, he had the whole room laughing as he weaved his comical personality into the moments when he had the floor. Elijah taught us to care for one another, to be mindful of how we respond to one another with our words and actions, and to give one another grace. Elijah's teaching is an exemplary model for the kind of personal and collective transformation that is possible if and when we slow down, pay attention to the physical sensations our body communicates, and learn to settle our bodies.

Again we see Ladson-Billings' three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy at work throughout this provocation. Elijah demonstrates academic success in this moment. He is an expert of his own experiences and he has clarified his understanding through working with his mother to create this presentation for his peers. Elijah has expanded his peers and my own understanding of autism. By teaching his peers through the lens of his own experiences, he affirms himself and the way his brain works uniquely while cultivating the groups' understanding. His positionality as an expert in this moment helps to clarify how his brain works differently than his peers while also demonstrating his capacities as teacher and learner. This moment offers a disruption of deficit-oriented thinking around individuals that have autism. Through his teaching, he allows us to understand the exceptionalities of his brain and gives us specific feedback about how we can be intentional with him over the course of the summer. This understanding does not end when the summer program is over, but it continued and continues to show up in the ways we work to understand and intentionally interact with people with autism for the rest of our lives.

Summary

In this chapter, I read four sources of post-intentional phenomenological material with a neuroscientific framework. Specifically, I drew on trauma research (van der Kolk, 2014) and historical trauma (Menakem, 2017) to explore what might be produced when reading the sources of PIP through these theories. I made connections to the readings of these provocations to Ladson-Billings (1995, 2006, 2014) theorizing of culturally relevant pedagogy. I argue that the work of cultivating a critical consciousness is a body and brain endeavor. I demonstrate some ways I have been tempted to over-emphasize our cognitive rational brain in examining the phenomenon how critical consciousness might take shape for young people and adults through youth participatory action research. I reveal the ways young people, through their attunement to their bodies, have taught me about this work. I have explored possibilities for learning to become settled in the body as a means to create space in our nervous system so that we can live more agentically in our individual and collective lives. I situate our racialized embodied experiences within our social contexts and show the importance of addressing this type of embodied knowledge in order to create educational opportunities that foster academic success, cultural competency, and sociopolitical consciousness. In Chapter Seven, I share important implications of this research. I also explore youth participatory action research as a well-aligned methodology for creating the conditions for this learning to take place.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

The four sources of post-intentional phenomenological material presented and theorized in chapters four and six are important ways in which critical consciousness took shape for young people and adults engaged in a process of youth participatory action research. These provocations and productions do not offer a clear or obvious way to understand how critical consciousness takes shape, nor do they provide a sequential, linear, or pragmatic guide for educators who aspire to cultivate the critical consciousness of oneself and the young people with whom the work alongside. Instead, these provocations and productions offer openings and possibilities for fostering bodily attunement, for expanding one's capacity to create space in their nervous system, for considering the multitude of ways one comes to know in their mind and body, as well as further opportunities to critically reflect and work toward more intentional alignment of one's behavioral responses with one's cognitive mind.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical model that addresses student achievement, affirms students' cultural identities, and develops critical perspectives to challenge social inequities. Culturally relevant pedagogy has been actualized into practice widely over the last thirty years, oftentimes with problematic implementation, and inequitable attention to the three core tenets. A tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy that is continually under-addressed in educators' practice, is the development of a sociopolitical consciousness in students and in themselves. An understanding of how historical and sociopolitical forces shape our everyday lived experiences can be mobilized into social action. Through the

development of a critical consciousness, students can be empowered to act—to develop individual and collective agency as a means of resisting oppressive conditions and working toward social justice.

In slowing down to explore how critical consciousness takes shape for young people and adults through a process of youth participatory action research this work has revealed several important insights and possibilities for educators and adults working with young people. This chapter is not intended to prescribe a set of practices or concrete actions, rather it is intended to serve as a space to reflect upon and to generate ideas to grapple with, as you think about what the study might mean for you and the work that you do.

Educators have been working for decades to address the systemic inequities that continue to be perpetuated through institutions, policies and practices. While we may have found big and small, individual or even collective successes, the opportunity gap for students of BIPOC, immigrant, refugee, and newcomer identities remains. Our existing educational system continues to uphold predominantly white, middle-class, patriarchal and protestant values where white bodies and the people that inhabit them continue to benefit the most (Gast, 2017). This work suggests that white supremacy is imprinted in our bodies and our social justice commitments and work cannot be addressed through our rational, thinking brains alone. This work suggests that an important part of fostering our own and one another's critical consciousness involves recognizing, listening to, and learning from the information our bodies communicate. When we are able to notice the physical sensations we experience, process the emotions that we feel, and begin to notice

when our bodies are and are not settled, we have initiated the necessary body work that must take place.

van der Kolk's (2014) extensive work with people who have experienced trauma teaches us that our brain is responsible for our survival. When our brain senses a threat, real or perceived, our reptilian brain initiates a stress response. The amygdala, the part of our brain responsible for fight, flight, or freeze behavioral responses, receives information more quickly and activates the stress response before we are able to consciously process what is happening and make decisions about how to respond. When people experience trauma, they tend to become hypervigilant or numb, prohibiting the ability to enjoy ordinary pleasures as well as the ability to be alert to new threats. It becomes increasingly difficult for people who have experienced trauma to discern when they are safe and when they need to activate a response to threat. In order for people to form authentic connections with others, they need to be able to shift between evaluating and responding to threats and experiencing a sense of safety. For educators, this means that in addition to developing the cognitive capacities of the young people we work with, it is equally important to support the development of bodily awareness and attunement that can be utilized to settle one's body, restoring a physical sense of safety.

In addition to drawing on neuroscience research to understand our brain-body physiology, we must also situate our physical bodies in the social fabric of our environments. In the United States, our racialized bodies carry historical trauma. Menakem argues, "white-body supremacy doesn't live in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies (2017, p. 5)." Racial trauma has been passed on from our ancestors, through the multiplicity of identities that we hold, generation over generation.

A neuroscience lens helps us to understand how this trauma is processed in our brains as part of our evolving mechanisms to survive. Although manifesting differently in the bodies we inhabit, we all carry historicized trauma and the associated "clean" and "dirty" pain that comes along with it. The work of becoming attuned to our body's physical sensations and the information these sensations communicate is painful. This pain is considered "clean" pain when we are willing to engage it, work through it to heal ourselves, and draw upon it to take new and different actions. The pain remains "dirty" when we bury it, deny it, internalize it, where it remains contained and contributes to the existing social order that is responsible for it in the first place. In this study, we saw glimpses of pain manifesting in white-bodies and in Black-bodies. When the young people walked away from the interview with a high-ranking public official feeling misunderstood, unheard, and perceiving the white-woman as racist we might read the white-body as fearful and unable or unsuccessful in metabolizing clean pain. In contrast, Elijah metabolized the pain he repeatedly experienced in social and educational contexts when he took it upon himself to teach the group about living with autism, transforming the ways in which group members were able to interact with him and one another moving forward. There are many ways to conceptualize clean and dirty pain manifesting in our own and one another's bodies. This study suggests that we have work to do. In addition to the cognitive work we do to understand our individual and collective histories and address existing social, economic and political inequities, we must learn to value and pay attention to what our bodies communicate and the bodily-knowledge we store. In becoming attuned to our bodily-knowledge we can create more space in our nervous

systems to settle our bodies and metabolize our pain to better align our actions with our social justice commitments, beliefs, and values.

In order to disrupt the status quo and create an education system that is equitable for all students, educators must work to cultivate their critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006, 2014; Winans, 2012; Gast, 2017). In Gast's work (2017) she suggests an embodied approach to teacher reflexivity by paying attention to teachers' emotions and wondering about what those emotions might convey in relation to their beliefs, values, and pedagogy. I see a direct connection to Gast's work with my own, suggesting that a necessary step to reading one's embodied emotions is an ability to pay attention to and learn from the physical sensations our body communicates. Our teacher educators continue to be predominantly white, middle-class, and female. Gast situates this reality as both a barrier to and an opportunity for building an anti-oppressive pedagogy. Gast traces the white feminization of teaching to the early 19th century though the common school movement, describing that "the movement argued that the virtues of women (e.g. self-sacrificing, pure, hard-working, duty-driven, caring) were exactly what the country needed in our classrooms" (2017, p. 65). In educational spaces, women became the individuals tasked with socializing a burgeoning urban and immigrant population. The virtues associated with white femininity became the standards for which teachers were and continue to be held to and forced to learn and assimilate to (Boler, 1999; Gast, 2017). In reading Menakem's theory of racialized bodies and historical trauma I read this movement as leading to stored bodily-knowledge of how teachers have learned to be and act in educational spaces through the values of white supremacy and white-femininity.

One way Gast explores the phenomenon of reading embodied emotions towards an anti-oppressive education is to name and theorize what she calls a "teacher-bot." Consider all that might be taking place in just a fraction of a teacher's day.

> Imagine squatting in the middle of a first-grade classroom whispering to a student about what detail she could add to her story while twenty-six other little bodies sit scribbling away at their desks, wandering aimlessly between tables, staring longingly out the window, or tugging at your sleeve to answer one of the most urgent questions of their young lives—'did you know that grandma was visiting?' At that moment, the classroom phone starts ringing, the door opens and a student from another classroom is sent in to take a break, and two students across the room start yelling about the blue crayon and who gets to use it. Meanwhile, you look over and notice that the little boy who joined your class last week has yet to pick up a crayon or a pencil to start his story and seems withdrawn (p. 74-75).

The nature of being a teacher requires one to make decisions about what to respond to, how to respond, when to respond, a million times each day. Gast situates the teacher-bot as the default operating system that teachers fall back on to help them make pedagogical and interpersonal decisions. She suggests that these default operating systems are what teacher education programs work to cultivate in pre-service educators, and that is deeply impacted by the assumptions held about "how a classroom should look, sound, and feel," given the teacher's previous experiences and the social context in which the teacher finds themself (p. 76). She goes on to describe the depersonalized and disembodied necessity of the teacher-bot. When teachers default to their teacher-bot, their actions can be conceptualized as occurring on "auto-pilot" (p. 76). Gast is careful to point out that many teachers rely on their teacher-bot, developing into talented, effective, and celebrated teachers. However, these teacher-bots are not equipped to disrupt status-quo education. Rather, they perpetuate and maintain it. Teacher-bots control young-bodies as they are controlled by their superiors. Gast describes teacher-bots as, "the middle

managers of the education system, and middle managers do not reorganize or revolutionize a company. They maintain it" (p. 76).

When teachers default to their teacher-bot mode, they are accessing and using bodily-knowledge that upholds and demands the virtues of white-femininity expected in education. In the ways they are expected to exert control on the bodies of students to mirror the control exerted on their bodies, they are metabolizing dirty pain and replicating the systems of education and white supremacy writ-large. Gast's call for teachers to read embodied emotions is an opportunity for educators to develop an attune-ness to their body-knowledge. In these moments, it might become possible to recognize discomfort, tension, anxiety, fear etc. as valuable information that can reveal one's positionality, one's power, and one's agency. If and when white-bodies are able to recognize the ways in which their current experiences are connected to a historical context of oppression, there might be space to respond in new and different ways.

Let us return to Menakem's definition of clean pain and imagine how this pain might be metabolized in our teaching spaces. Provided that the majority of our teaching force is comprised of white, middle-class women, let's imagine a few common classroom scenarios and some alternative responses for shifting the shame, denial, and avoidance of dirty pain to a metabolization of clean pain. What would it look like if white teachers refused to police their students as dictated by the virtues of white-femininity? What would it look like if white teachers addressed racist comments or jokes made by colleagues or students in classrooms or teacher workrooms? What would it look like if white teachers took it upon themselves to investigate their practices, carefully examining for whom their pedagogy works, does not work, engages, does not engage, supports

academically, socially and emotionally and who it silences or violates? What would it look like for white teachers to recognize their own disproportionate referral of Black students for disciplinary action? What would it like to interrogate why that is occurring in their own practice and resist perpetuating the practice?

I do not mean to simplify the complexity of metabolizing the ways in which white femininity has been taught to and lives in educator bodies. I also know that the possibilities for how our racialized bodies store historical trauma is infinite and this manifests in very different ways depending on the multiplicities of our identity. However, if we are able to process and metabolize our historical trauma as clean pain, we might discover new and different ways of acting that are more aligned with an anti-oppressive pedagogy. Although the extrapolation above is an elaboration of Gast's call for examining white-femininity in white, female teacher-bodies, all racialized bodies are impacted by our historical trauma and can benefit from becoming attuned to and creating space to settle our bodies in the presence of one another. When historical trauma is metabolized as clean pain there are opportunities for individual and collective agency that have the potential to be healing and ultimately transformative.

In Niedzielski's work on cultivating teacher presence through mindfulness (2017) she calls teachers to slow down. In this call for slowing down, she encourages teachers to find ways to *be* present and pay attention to the ways they experience emotional responses to stressful stimuli, the ways they read their reactions to such stimuli, and what reflecting on these experiences may offer for their future decision making.

Towards the end of her work, Niedzielski situates her learnings in the larger context of how teachers, like many caring professionals (human-service oriented

workers), are encouraged to focus strictly on their cognitive abilities and to deny or silence their emotional and bodily knowing. She details the ways in which the institutionalization of teaching and the demands of what a teacher must *do*, strip the teacher of their ability to *be* present and connect with students beyond the task of "accomplishing" learning. In detailing the way emotions are leveraged as tools of social control, Niedzielski states that the ideal teacher is one that becomes the "cerebral, rational, intellectual, talking head—intentionally disconnected from the emotional body to maintain control of self, the space, and another. There is a distinctive mind/body split" (p. 179). I draw two primary connections to this study. One possible reading is that teachers struggle to connect with students due to their need to accomplish tasks. In those instances, teachers are drawing upon bodily-knowledge to control bodies in order to get through a process, rather than *being* present and finding authentic connections with students to support engaged learning opportunities. As teachers develop mindfulness practices, they are able to recognize the discord they feel and metabolize clean pain by building their capacity to slow down and connect with their students amidst the pressures of the work. What adds to the difficulty of this practice is an over-emphasis on teaching as a primarily cognitive act. Structures of power and positionality in society work to silence bodily knowledge in educational spaces. Niedzielski stories the mind-body split in the professionalizing of teaching that discourages teachers from paying attention to their body and emotions. This false duality prevents teachers from engaging in practices that align with their desire to authentically connect with their students through their pedagogy. Niedzielski's study illuminates the inclination to ignore bodily-knowledge and how an attunement to this knowledge leads to increased teacher efficacy and well-being.

Niedzielski also emphasizes the importance of perspective taking, specifically working to uncover the possibility of stress and suffering as productive and purposeful. I draw a parallel connection here again, in suggesting that our ability to metabolize clean pain is also a productive and purposeful force. There are opportunities for us to pay attention to and learn from the important signals our bodies communicate to us (stomach aches, mysterious back pain, headaches, a pit in your stomach, a sinking heart). Rather than burying, ignoring, and denying these signals, our ability to metabolize clean pain affords us greater individual and collective agency.

Niedzielski reflects on what her mindfulness practices offers her, providing the example of when her pre-teenage daughter experiences a rush of emotions that often triggers her own reaction where she is most tempted to react.

> Mindful awareness helps me to notice those moments; moments when I feel my body starting to engage with her energy. In this noticing, I enable myself with a choice of how I wish to respond based off my awareness of how I most desire to *be* as a mother in such moments (p. 145).

In this articulation, Niedzielski observes the physical sensations her body communicates. In this slowing down and paying attention to these sensations, she gains greater agency in responding to her daughter in ways that align with her vision of motherhood. Niedzielski goes on to describe the ways in which teacher presence can be cultivated through mindfulness. Such training and experiences produce new ways of *being* in the classroom. Similarly, I am suggesting that an attunement to our bodily-knowledge can allow us to create space in our nervous systems that will allow us to settle our bodies as well as support us in better aligning our actions with our rational, thinking brains.

The Weight of the Trauma our Bodies Carry

I have spent a good deal of time discussing the importance of white-bodies, in particular the need for white-women bodies, to metabolize clean pain. I have spent time on white-bodies because of my power and positionality as a white woman and the predominance of white woman-bodies in education. However, I want to make clear that while all bodies carry racialized trauma, bodies do not carry the weight of this trauma similarly or comparably. Black-bodies carry a much heavier load than white-bodies because of our nation's history of slavery. Indigenous-bodies also carry a much heavier load than white-bodies because of our nation's history of colonization. The bodies of people color carry a heavier load that white-bodies because of our nation's history and current practice of assimilation and cultural erasure. Not only do racialized bodies carry the weight of historical trauma differently, BIPOC-bodies encounter daily assault and barriers to well-being due to the ongoing nature of white-body supremacy that permeates the very air we breathe.

> The cultural operating system of white-body supremacy influences or determines many of the decisions we make, the options we select, the choices open to us, and how we make those decisions and choices (Menakem, 2017, p. xix).

White-body supremacy has become a toxicity we ingest in our bodies and it is through working with our bodies that we can find space to heal and be in a new way with one another.

The Danger of Falling Short

Just like Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy has been taken up widely and often problematically in practice, trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed care has been increasingly showing up in school settings and being taken up across a wide

spectrum of harmful to effective practices. In a recent article published by Carrie Gaffney (Teaching Tolerance, Issue 62, Summer 2019) titled *When Schools Cause Trauma*, the author outlines some of the problematic ways trauma-informed work in schools has manifested. She suggests that one reason for the shortcomings of trauma-informed practices is that the common assessment tool public agencies often use to identify trauma is the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) score, which when established twenty years ago, did not account for trauma resulting specifically from racism, homophobia, transphobia, hetero-sexism, xenophobia, and other systemic injustices.

> In the initial, landmark ACE study of more than 17,000 HMO members from 1995-1997, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanenter researchers found that two-thirds of the respondents had at least one adverse childhood experience. They also found that the higher a person's ACE score, the greater likelihood of poor physical and mental health, risky health behaviors, and diminished educational, occupational and income opportunities (p. 1-2).

The article points out that oftentimes, when schools and practitioners attempt to implement trauma-informed care, schools still remain a place that traumatizes and re-traumatizes students. Gorski (educational scholar and founder of the Equity Literacy Institute and EdChange) posits that a significant factor in the traumatization and re-traumatization of students in schools is the focus on individual traumas without naming and addressing systemic injustice.

> If we're talking about any trauma-informed practices and we're not talking about naming and then eliminating injustices as they operate in schools, we're not doing what we say we're doing (Gorski, p. 3)

Another way that students experience trauma in the classroom is through the curriculum used, "poorly chosen readings, activities and assignments" (p. 3). When students read stories, write about, or act out traumatizing historical events exploring how racism

manifested in the past but are not supported to discuss and act on the racism they, or their peers, or families and communities are experiencing *today*, students are harmed. When students are tracked based on academic performance, they receive the message that they are being labeled as smart or not smart and these messages are dehumanizing. When teachers and schools implement behavioral systems that disproportionately impact entire populations of students, the possibility of traumatization occurs. When schools inadvertently apply deficit ideologies to the work they do with teachers and students, the possibility for trauma occurs. The likelihood that schools are places that students' risk being traumatized or re-traumatized is high and therefore it is necessary for administrators, leaders, teachers, and families to interrogate the practices promoted and implemented in classrooms and school-wide.

It is important for readers of this work to be aware of the dangerous possibilities of *doing* trauma-informed work. For those who work with young people, it is essential to grapple with the systemic nature of individual's experiences of trauma. It is necessary to critically reflect on how your intentions to engage this work measure up against the impact on those with whom you work alongside. It is necessary to engage the bodily-knowledge we hold to better understand and address individual and collective experiences of trauma and to imagine and explore new ways of being and acting in these spaces.

Methodological Implications

YPAR

In choosing YPAR for this work I sought to engage young people in an exploration of their world and their agency in the world. The result of my study led me to

pay closer attention to the way our critical consciousness was taking shape as an attunement to and response to our bodily knowledge. With this perspective, I would like to imagine some different ways YPAR could be taken up to better invite young people to engage with and pay attention to knowledge in their bodies. YPAR positions young people as experts on issues that impact their lives. In this study, our topic broadly encompassed adolescent health, well-being, and barriers to health and well-being. While the young people and I worked intentionally to unveil the ways in which we knew a lot about these matters, there were ways in which the questions we asked one another and explored could have allowed us to pay closer attention to the knowledge in our bodies. Here again are the secondary research questions explored through our YPAR group: (1) How do young people define health and well-being? (2) What are young people doing on an everyday basis that contributes to their health and well-being? (3) What barriers to health and well-being do young people face? (4) What healing strategies do young people use? What if, instead of asking the secondary questions in this same format through three focus group interviews, the research participants and I had prompted ourselves with: *Think about a time when you, or someone you care about, experienced a problem related to their health or well-being. What was the problem? How did you/they respond to that problem? What was the result? What does it make you wonder about when you reflect back? How are you feeling when you reflect back on and describing this story?*

One way I might explore this prompt would be to think back to a teaching moment in which one of my kindergarten students came to school on Field day even though she had a high temperature. I did not know this at the time, so I had her out playing with everyone else in the extreme heat. As the youngest child in a household

where the home language was Spanish, English was difficult and she was quiet at school. My inability to speak Spanish inhibited the relationship I was able to form and the communication I had with both the student and her mother. These factors collided to produce a very dangerous circumstance when this student started to seize upon returning to the school after being outside all morning. After calling 911 and riding in an ambulance to the hospital, after hours of not being able to reach mom, I learned some context for this series of events. This information forced me to confront the judgment and assumptions I was incorrectly assigning to the situation and my reading of this mother and her ability to care for her child. I learned that this mother had to make the difficult choice of whether to go to work or risk losing her job for staying home to care for her sick child. I learned that this mother, likely an undocumented citizen, worked in the back of a restaurant and was forced to turn over her phone at the beginning of her shift. I imagine that she was intensely monitored and given few if any breaks during her shift. Upon arriving to school to pick up her children at dismissal, she learned her daughter had been taken to the hospital in an ambulance. I can imagine the shock, confusion, and fear that pulsed through her body upon learning this. She came with her son to the hospital and it was clear she cared tremendously for her daughter's well-being. This experience leaves me wondering about the ways I have missed my students and their families due to my limited understanding of the complex realities of their day-to-day lives. Some questions I am left with are: What it is like to navigate institutional spaces where people responsible for the well-being of your child do not speak your first language? What it is like to have to work a job that does not allow you to call in sick or have access to your phone in case of an emergency? What is it like to have to weigh the cost of your job

security to that of your ability to stay home and take care of your child? When I think about how it feels to recall this memory of someone else's traumatic experience and my responsibility in that experience, I feel sick. I feel like I put a child in harm's way and assumed the worst about a mother's love for her child. I feel guilt and shame about what I did not understand.

In paying attention to the physical sensations that my body is communicating and the emotions they evoke, there is an opening for me to expand my critical consciousness in important ways. By reflecting upon my sense of shame, the assumptions that I made, and what I did not know about this family's experiences, there is an opportunity to metabolize clean pain. Instead of burying my shameful feelings, I am able to confront and process them by connecting this experience to the larger social and economic contexts in which health disparities exist for communities historically marginalized by our systems and institutions. It is through this process of remembering that I am able to imagine how I could have acted differently and how I could act in the future. I can imagine and put into practice different ways to cultivate relationships with future students and families whose first language is not English. I can commit to interrogating and challenging the assumptions that I bring into the spaces I occupy in my white-body and in my position of power. I better understand additional factors in family's experiences that produce health disparities.

If young people had been prompted to reflect on and share personal stories related to experiences of health, well-being, and barriers to health well-being I imagine that provocations and productions of critical consciousness would have been vast and expansive. Part of what a prompt like this affords is a way for young people to reflect on

their bodily-knowledge related to a social issue that impacts their lives or the lives of someone they know. Through the exploration of one's bodily-knowledge important insights may be revealed that are necessary for young people to critically act, reflect, and dialogue while increasing their individual and collective agency.

I chose YPAR as a method to explore the post-intentional phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape for young people and adults because of the ways the method routinely engages students in an iterative cycle of critical reflection, dialogue, and action. The provocations and productions explored in this study support YPAR as a process for fostering critical consciousness. Again, I return to the question of what it would mean to create more opportunities in educational contexts where educators and students are encouraged and supported to pay attention to, value, and engage with their bodies and body-knowledge? What might be possible if and when we pay attention to and value our bodily-knowledge as equally important to our learning in spaces that perpetually prioritize cognitive reasoning, skills, and abilities? How might we take the lessons and practices of YPAR and leverage them in other educational spaces to produce these moments of bodily-knowing that allow for critical action, reflection and dialogue?

Post-Intentional Phenomenology

I situated post-intentional phenomenology as a way of living through time, space, and interacting with others and the world around me. In this way of moving through the world, determining what it might mean to be and know, I found myself slowing down, seeking and observing the multiplicities of contexts producing and provoking each small, large, insignificant and significant lived experience and the meaning I drew while reflecting on these instances. This study offered me an opportunity to practice a

philosophy of lived experience in which I explored a post-intentional phenomenon that is produced and provoked by social contexts. I sought to engage young people in an exploration of their world and their agency in the world. In grappling with young people's understandings, I also grappled with my understandings of young people and the world we share. The experience of unexpected loss propelled me to consider the bodily-knowledge we store and how this knowledge is equally important to reading the phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape.

The phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape is always at work, whether we are aware or not. It is impossible to tie down the phenomenon of critical consciousness taking shape. Young people and adults come to understand themselves in complex, unstable, and shifting ways. Young people engaged in a deeply important and intense conversation around recognizing biases and the prevalence of colorism and then casually enjoyed a meal and played together at the park. Post-intentional phenomenology lends itself to this study because it engages with the complexity of this phenomenon in a way that resonates with the complexity of our lived experience. It is impossible to describe this phenomenon concretely and make fixed and stable statements about how critical consciousness takes shape. Rather, my learning in this study occurred through bringing my full self to bear as I both engaged with young people during our youth participatory action research project and in my post-reflexing on moments in which I read the phenomenon as being provoked and produced. Our bodies are always communicating with us and we can foster an attunement to our bodily-knowledge. Living phenomenologically encourages one to listen to and learn from the bodily-knowledge we store.

Conclusion

It was important to me that this study illuminate the immense knowledge and capacity young people have. In slowing down to explore how critical consciousness took shape for young people and I throughout the youth participatory action research project, it became apparent that in many cases, important and powerful information shows up first in our bodies, before we have the language to articulate what has or is happening and how or why it matters. This bodily-knowledge can be leveraged and coupled with our cognitive knowledge and skills to better understand ourselves and the world around us and can better inform our decision-making and action-taking.

The youth researchers participating in this project are brilliant, compassionate, and reflective. Young people live complex lives and have important stories to tell and insights to communicate. So much is possible if and when adults intentionally disrupt traditional adult-youth dynamics and redistribute their power, while working to position themselves as collaborative partners with a shared responsibility of teaching and learning with and from one another.

This study has the possibility to attract the attention of adults who care for young people, youth-workers, and educators that may imagine another way they can be with, care for, and work alongside young people. I hope this study will support folks in creating space in their nervous system and finding ways to heal. I hope this study will activate and swell one's critical consciousness in new and different ways. I hope this study will inspire creativity in lesson plans and units of study that center students' voices and expertise. I hope this study will shift teaching philosophies and pedagogies to better value and explore the knowledge within our bodies. I hope this study can support us in

building our collective capacities to disrupt white-body supremacy and create a socially-just society.

I would like to close by reflecting back to the vignette I shared in Chapter Three, a conversation that happened in the community-based organization in 2016, a year before this project began. In a way that poetically underscores how important knowledge lives in our bodies—often unmined and untapped—our conversation with young people in the program resonated strongly with what became illuminated in the findings of this study. Let me remind you of the quote shared that day.

> *"Healing begins where the wound was made," by Alice Walker.*

It is incredible that the very first reaction to this quote reflects Robert's wisdom and embodied knowledge of this truth. Robert articulates the need for us to metabolize clean pain in order to heal.

> *"I think this means… that when someone really hurts you, like not a cut or something like that, but with words, that you got to go to where it hurts and try to fix that."*

Immediately after, Crystal names how burying dirty pain causes damage in our own and one another's lives.

> *"I think it means like when people say mean things to you that those things last if you don't try and heal them."*

I then recognized and shared my history of struggling to do the work of metabolizing clean pain and sitting with discomfort.

> *Sometimes I bury small things and eventually, overtime, I'm like a volcano waiting to erupt. That most of the time, for me, burying a bunch of small things, often leads to an eruption—a breakdown. For me, the quote is a reminder that burying is not healing.*

A year before beginning this project, a year before losing my brother, I knew in my body what I ultimately came to discover as a conclusion of this study. May this be a reminder of the powerful and life-changing knowledge that we carry within us and what healing might be possible when we learn to listen.

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